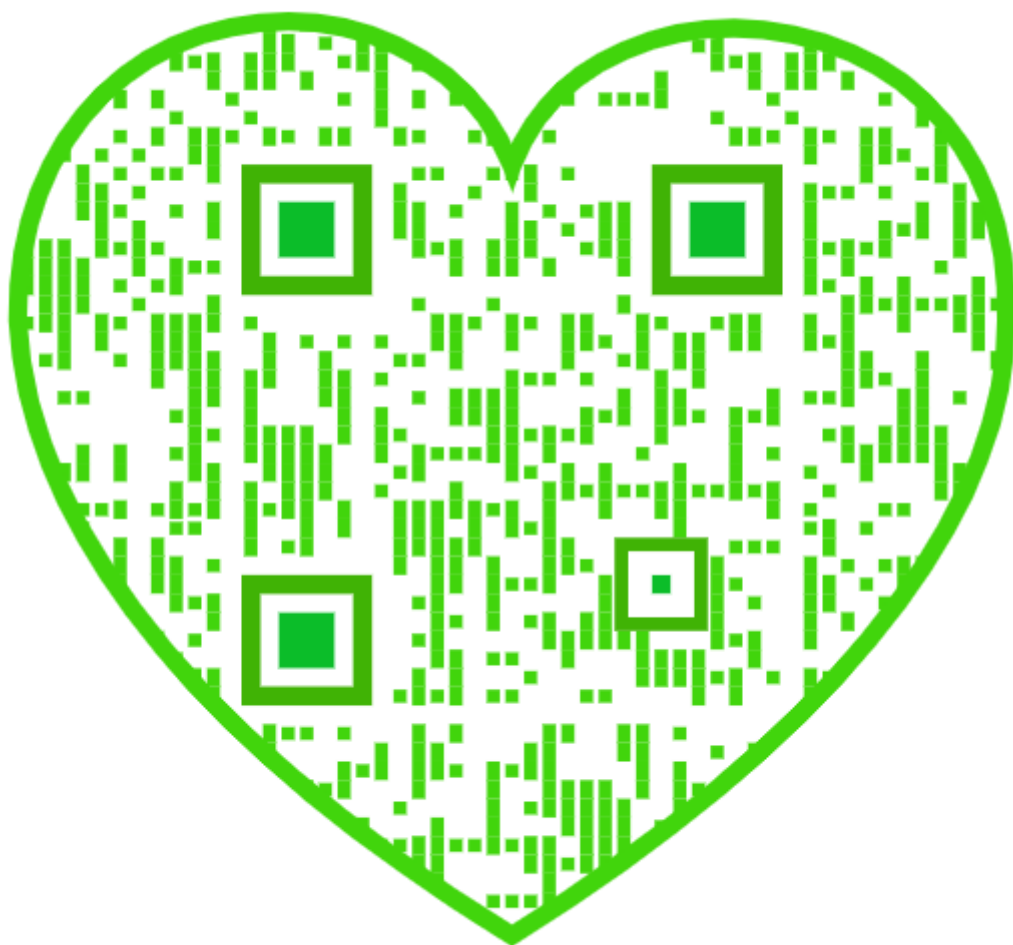


Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**

Author: Ryuyu

Illustrator: Daburyu





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1

CONTENTS

Prologue

○ I Have Wings for Some Reason

Chapter 1

○ Encounter

Chapter 2

○ Daily Life in a Dungeon

Side Story 1

○ A Man Named Yuki

Chapter 3

○ Contact

Chapter 4

○ Enhancing a Dungeon

Chapter 5

○ Defending a Dungeon

Side Story 2

○ Gamdia Lawston

Epilogue

○ The Start of Each Day

Special Story

○ Stroll

Afterword

Prologue: I Have Wings for Some Reason

“Huh...”

With the help of a handheld mirror, I stared hard at every inch of myself from all possible angles. Dark hair, dark eyes—all the same features I’d seen countless times before. Gun to my head, I’d say my only remotely standout facial feature was my naturally steely gaze. My height was just as average as my face, and though I wasn’t jacked, I was no slouch either. Nothing to write home about. Nothing *yet*, at least.

I should mention that I wasn’t looking myself over with the proverbial fine-tooth comb out of narcissism or anything. I was actually inspecting myself. Good thing too, because I found something when I checked out my back. Reflected in the mirror was...a pair of wings. Were they bat wings? Dragon wings, maybe?

I didn’t know how to describe them, but raven-colored wings proceeded to *unfurl* from my shoulder blades. I wasn’t used to the sensation, so it felt kinda unnatural at first. When I forced myself to focus on them and they flapped like wings were supposed to, though, I accepted that they were in fact a part of me now.

Last but not least, my eyes. I know I said they were dark, but truth be told, only one of them still was. The other one was stained a deep scarlet. Apparently, they were called “Demon Eyes” in this world, and they seemed to be an ability unique to this particular race.

Why did this feel like main character syndrome, but real? Aaand I just remembered that I’d once gone through my very own phase of said syndrome. Time to crawl into a hole and die.

Repressing that memory again, another weird thing was that even though I looked like this now, for whatever reason, I was wearing a T-shirt and jeans. A casual outfit on a demon made absolutely zero sense. Felt like shitty cosplay to me.

Hold up. Was my shirt ripped where the wings came out of my back? I couldn't see, but it had to be, right?

“Ugh, screw it. I'm going to sleep.”

Exhausted by the whole situation, I turned my brain off. I used some of my Dungeon Points, aka DP, to buy a futon, which I put in the throne room. Then I passed out.



Let's rewind the clock a bit so I can tell you exactly what happened. Long story short, I'd been reincarnated. I died in a run-of-the-mill accident on Earth and was reborn here, wherever “here” was. I'd realized what had happened as soon as I woke up.

How, you ask? Because I still remembered what it had felt like to die. I remembered the sensation of being flung away as the car slammed into me. Of my bones breaking. Of each and every cell in my body screaming as it broke down.

I could still feel the life leaving me just as surely as my blood had, pooling on the ground around me. I'd known I was dying, but strangely enough, I hadn't felt any pain as my vision slowly darkened into nothingness. And yet, all the repulsive sensations of death lingered even after being reborn...

With a shudder of horror dragged from the depths of my soul, I took a deep breath and banished those terrible memories from my mind. The fact of the matter was that I should have already been dead. Instead, I woke up and found myself collapsed in this weird throne room.

The room had an elegant chandelier and refined columns and walls, but there were no windows to speak of, and it wasn't all that big. To top it all off, behind me stood a simple but impressive, well-made throne—the centerpiece of the room. Surprisingly enough, instead of the typical grandiose red carpet, a blue one stretched from said throne all the way across the room. At its end towered an austere, imposing door that was very clearly immovable. You could say the room was... If I had to guess, I'd say it was some sort of evil lair. It felt like the area in a game's final dungeon where you'd fight the Demon King, but smaller in scale.

Anyway, I was done zoning out; it was time to get on my feet and figure out exactly what the hell was going on. But as I stood up, I caught a glimpse of something behind the throne.

“What is *that*?”

“That” was a glowing, rainbow-colored orb about half the size of a basketball. For no real reason, I walked toward it with my hand outstretched, and—

“Huh?! Gaaaahhhh!!!”

The moment I touched it, my head started to pound. It felt like a direct assault on my mind, and it was so awful that it crept through my whole body. My legs buckled from the agonizing shock, dropping me to my hands and knees before I finally collapsed fully onto the floor.

Tears streamed from my eyes as my vision blurred from the intense pain. I had the powerful urge to throw up too. Lying there on the floor, I couldn’t do anything but writhe in agony, screams tearing from my throat.

“Rgh... Ahhh... So that’s it...”

After what felt like an eternity, the hellish torture started to let up, the pain receding like the tide. Still breathing roughly, I managed to utter a short phrase.

“Open...menu.”

As soon as I said it, a transparent glass slab appeared in front of me. Basically, it looked like a screen from a game menu. Its design would adapt to the being who spoke the command, making it as easy as possible for them to use. For example, if a member of a primitive race like the goblins, which existed in this world, said “Open menu,” the interface would show up as a stone slab. When other humanoid species gave the same command, it usually appeared as a book. In my particular case, I think the interface decided that a game menu would be the best option since I played video games so much in my former life.

All of this information popped into my head so naturally, like an encyclopedia had opened up in there. Holy crap...there *was* a wiki in my brain now, because that orb really *had* implanted knowledge directly into me.

Still unsteady, I massaged my skull while directing my gaze toward the

interface. Starting at the top, I saw four options displayed on the “screen”: Stats, Dungeon Points (DP) Catalog, Dungeon, and Loot Roll. I really, *really* wanted to know more about that last one, but decided that I should probably start with Stats. The screen worked just like a smartphone’s, so when I tapped on Stats, it spat out my data.

“Interesting... Whoa, I’m an archdemon.”

Uhhh, however it happened, apparently I wasn’t human anymore.

Name: Yuki

Race: Archdemon

Class: Demon Lord

Level: 1

HP: 2,100 / 2,100

MP: 6,700 / 6,700

Strength: 651

Stamina: 685

Agility: 550

Magic: 897

Dexterity: 1,250

Luck: 70

Ability Points: 5

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 1

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World

Dungeon Points (DP): 1,000

So not only was I a demon now, but I was a demon *lord* to boot? Just looking

at that word was unsettling. Wait, no, scratch that. In this world, anybody who controlled a dungeon was called a lord. Learned that from the encyclopedia in my head.

I saw that both my last name and the kanji for my first name had disappeared, so I guess I was just plain ol' Yuki now. I had never really liked my name since so many girls had it too, but now it was just totally meaningless, and that was worse.

Another thing I noticed was my shockingly low Luck stat—not that I had anything to compare my stats to. Then again, I *did* get hit by a car and die, so it kinda made sense. And it baffled me that Dexterity was so much higher than everything else. It wasn't like I'd ever been good with my hands or anything.

Next, I slid my finger over the Abilities section, and the screen displayed their specifics. Analysis, Inventory, and Polyglot were apparently pretty common. Analysis leveled up as I did, and the more it increased, the more information I would get on the interface. With Inventory, the more magic I had, the more items I could hold. The ability to understand languages spoke for itself, so enough said there. Demon Eyes...looked to be unique to archdemons. It seemed like an ability that made it possible to see the power of an opponent's magic, but I still wasn't sure of its usefulness.

Then there were Ability Points, which were used to strengthen abilities. Abilities maxed out at level 10, and the number of Ability Points required for leveling them increased proportionally from one level to the next. Pretty standard stuff. The section beneath that one happened to be Title, and that was...

The Demon Lord from Another World: A being that came from a different world. Possesses the special ability to understand any language.

Yup, that confirmed it. I was definitely in another world. I mean, I'd figured as much, but it was nice to know for sure.

Having gotten the gist of my stats, I closed out of that section and tapped on

Dungeon Points (DP) Catalog. Just like I'd suspected, it featured things that I could buy using my Dungeon Points, which were listed in the Stats section, meaning they were this world's currency. The catalog contained everything from typical fantasy RPG items like swords, shields, armor, and staffs, to more ordinary things like toothbrushes, cups, and food. And what do ya know, it also had stupidly expensive stuff like video games.

It was no Amazon, but it was definitely pretty convenient. I suspected that there were two versions of the DP Catalog—one with stuff inherent to this world, and one with items tailored to me and my experiences. That was the only reason I could think of for there being random things from my world that so obviously ruined the immersion here. But compared to this world's items, the ones from Earth were a *lot* more expensive. I was probably going to have to hold off on getting them for a while.

Then we had Loot Roll, which had been bugging me this whole time. Shame that it was just a normal, loot-box-style RNG pull like all the other ones out there. There were four cost options: 100 DP, 1,000 DP, 10,000 DP, and 100,000 DP. Didn't know what you'd get until you pulled.

And finally, there was the Dungeon category. It included topics like how to increase a dungeon's level, how to expand it, how to summon monsters, and so on. Basically, it was a guide with a bunch of tips for building a dungeon. I figured I'd read up on the actual details later on, but then my eyes strayed toward the first sentence, which taught me something:

Dungeons are living beings.

To summarize the rest of that section, dungeons were unique to this world and were born in places with vast concentrations of mana, which was essentially magical energy. Just like any other creature when it first came into existence, newborn dungeons were weak and therefore easily destroyed, with the most common destroyers apparently being humans. They often targeted the dungeon's core—essentially its heart—which just so happened to be the rainbow-colored orb I'd touched earlier. Interesting. It seemed pretty obvious that these orbs were super-rare items in this world.

Because of the massive amount of energy it contained, a dungeon's core also attracted hordes of power-hungry monsters, which were considered wildlife in this world. In other words, for a dungeon, everybody was an enemy unless proven otherwise. As a result, in order to protect itself, a dungeon would summon someone to manage it and increase its likelihood of survival. Survival through symbiosis seemed to be the name of the game, with the summoned lord taking up the mantle of both protector and caretaker of their dungeon.

Most of the time, a dungeon would "invite" monsters that lived nearby and force one of them to be reborn as its lord. But then there was me. Because this dungeon had been born in a place with an extremely high concentration of mana, it ended up having a lot more power than other dungeons. It had used most of that power to summon a suitable lord, which had turned out to be me—or more specifically, the soul I'd left behind after I'd died on Earth. Guess that meant I make a better demon lord than I do a human? Kinda messed up if you ask me.

To recap, in the interest of its own defense, this dungeon had reincarnated me as an archdemon. It'd unilaterally decided that its chance of survival would be higher if I was reborn as a nonhuman. According to my mental wiki, a situation like this wouldn't be possible without the perfect soul for being an archdemon, but... Wait, maybe that was it. I'd been addicted to this one game in my other life, and I usually played as a Great Demon Lord, so that could have been it. *Not*.

Anyway, having power wasn't exactly a bad thing. Based on the info embedded in my brain, I knew this world was much more dangerous than Earth. There were a buttload of races, which also meant a buttload of wars. Add on the fact that low-level demon lord morons ran around killing humans indiscriminately, and that meant an insane amount of hatred directed at demon lords in general. Basically, since I'd been reborn as one of them, I needed any and every little bit of power I could get in order to increase my chance of survival here.

"Hmm..."

I glared at the dungeon core, the annoying orb that had nearly given me an aneurysm. Apparently, the dungeon's power massively influenced the lord's

abilities on an intrinsic level. If a dungeon died, so too did its lord. Since a dungeon committed most of its resources to its lord, if the lord died, the dungeon's power weakened drastically, ultimately leading to its destruction as well. In short, our fates were tied.

“Goddammit. What a pain in the ass this world is. Of all the places I could’ve ended up.”

Then again, if the dungeon didn’t exist, I wouldn’t have come back to life. It was hard to be mad at that.

I gingerly extended my arm toward the orb and brushed its surface. No pain this time around. It really was my second heart now, huh? This really was my second life. I’d been given another chance to live, and I could do it the way I wanted to, regrets be damned. And all I had to do in exchange was protect this orb? Deal.

With those thoughts in my head, I realized that I still hadn’t given my new archdemon form the once-over, so that was when I’d opened the DP Catalog and bought myself a hand mirror.



And so, a new day dawned. A good night’s rest cleared my head right up, so I put the futon away in my inventory, then opened the DP Catalog to look for something to eat for breakfast.

Speaking of the inventory system, I found its operating mechanism fascinating. Activating it opened a rift in the air near you, and you’d just shove whatever you wanted to store into it. After trying it out earlier, I’d wondered how I’d be able to take things out of my inventory. The moment I’d had that thought, a list of inventory items popped into my mind. All I had to do was scroll mentally through the list, then stick my hand into the rift to grab whatever it was I wanted. Can you say “convenient”?

By the way, you’re probably wondering how I, in a windowless room, knew that it was the next day, or that it was time for breakfast and not lunch, or about the existence of time at all. Get this: the top-right corner of the menu screen showed the date and time. When I first saw that, I almost thought I was *actually* in a game. Then I realized that the menu was just based on a game I

knew. I guess you could call that a reality check.

Anyway, back to business. I chose bacon and toast for breakfast, then planted my butt on the throne since there was nowhere else to sit. I ate restlessly as the wheels turned in my head trying to figure out how I could get more Dungeon Points. The thousand I'd started off with seemed like it was the default amount, but it was my only lifeline. So, rightfully, it made me kinda anxious that the only direction that number went was down.

There were four ways to get more DP: having monsters I didn't summon in the dungeon's territory (stronger monsters gave more DP), killing intruders in the dungeon's territory (stronger intruders gave more DP), turning monsters' corpses or other items into energy in the dungeon's territory (stronger items gave more DP), and passive generation (a stronger dungeon produced more DP).

Just looking at the options made it obvious that the most efficient way to increase my DP was through monsters. Seemed ironic that the dungeon had summoned a caretaker—me—so it wouldn't be killed by monsters, but then the dungeon lord—still me—had to rely on those monsters to make a living.

This had to have been survival of the fittest in action, seeing as the dungeon was alive too. The circle of life was truly inescapable, huh? And as for option four, passive generation, I only got one dungeon point every three hours. It was such a negligible amount that there was no way I could rely on it. Especially not when I didn't know what would happen going forward.

I knew I had to set up the dungeon as soon as possible so that we could both survive, but there were a few things I still needed to know before I could do that. For starters, what exactly were dungeons and lords? And what did others think of them? It'd help if I knew the actual lay of the land too. I had to learn as much as I could before I made my move, and I had to do it fast. Oh, hey, that's like conducting market research. Crazy that I remembered something like that from my old life.

In any case, thanks—or maybe no thanks—to the mental wiki the dungeon had forced into my brain, I still didn't really get what “intruders” were since they were only described from the dungeon's perspective. According to my

wiki, “Intruders are evil beings that come to destroy us.” I mean, technically it wasn’t wrong. Things that try to kill you would be considered evil.

“Well, time to get going.”

Swallowing my last bite of breakfast, I brushed the breadcrumbs off me, then dragged my gaze to the only door in the room. For the time being, I needed to prioritize learning what lay beyond it. I was scared and curious at the same time, but I knew that nothing would change if I didn’t take this first step.

Once I’d tinkered around a bit more in the DP Catalog to get ready, I stood up and started walking across the room. Ever so cautiously, I approached that imposing door. Pulling it open, I saw...

“The hell? A cave?”

A giant cave opened up outside the door. Crystal clear stalactites that looked unbelievably old dangled above and refracted light that beamed in from a small crack in the ceiling. The whole area sparkled like a ballroom lit by a chandelier.

As I kept walking, I saw water collected in a sunken part of the cave. It was so clear and pure that I could see straight through to the bottom. The view almost made me feel like I was in a fairy tale.

Turned out that the door had been created deep inside this cave. The dungeon’s territory was still just that throne room, so it was a natural cave, not something built by the dungeon.

After making sure nobody else was around, I looked toward the cave’s...exit? No, its entrance, where I could see sunlight glowing. My footsteps echoed as I headed for that light, and I could feel the fresh, cool air flowing in. Definitely wouldn’t need an air conditioner in the summertime here.

When I finally reached the entrance, I couldn’t believe my eyes. An endless, clear blue sky stretched out above me. A vast green forest filled up my view below. Wind blew through the trees, rustling the leaves enough that I could hear them if I listened closely. A huge river, sparkling under the sun’s rays, wound through the land.

With a horizon that seemed to go on forever, the visual feast didn’t end there. Soon enough, I found a breathtaking mountain range that pierced straight

through the clouds. And way off in the distance peeked a different but no less magnificent blue—the sea? Lastly, at the edge of the infinite sky floated what looked like an island. A waterfall rushed down from it, the sunlight shooting through it and creating a rainbow.

“Woow...”

Stunned by the gorgeous view, tears unconsciously slipped from the corners of my eyes. Before me lay a mysterious, majestic world I couldn’t even begin to describe. My limited vocabulary would never do it justice.

And I was a part of this world now too. I wasn’t human anymore, and I had wings. I wondered if I’d be able to use them to soar through the beautiful sky soon. Just thinking about it made me giddy.

Oh, side note: my wings were gone right now. I hadn’t been able to fall asleep last night because they were a pain in the ass, so I’d tried to think of a way to make them smaller. While I was testing out different ways to fold them, they’d suddenly disappeared, just like that.

I still didn’t know the extent of my new powers, but I *did* know that my magic had something to do with the wings. And now I also knew that I could control whether the wings were there or not. So, since last night, I’d been keeping them out of sight. It was reassuring to know that I could control my own body, at least.

After being lost in the view for a while, I snapped back to reality and remembered why I even came out here in the first place: to get the lay of the land. I needed to understand the geography of this world. From the looks of it, I was halfway up a mountain—okay, “halfway” was probably an understatement, considering the view. Realistically speaking, I had to be pretty high up. As for any villages or other signs of life...it looked like nothing was nearby.

Still studying the landscape, I realized that the cave I’d just walked out of was carved into a cliffside. And shit, there was no way down; I had no choice but to go up. With that decision made for me, I headed around the mountain, looking for a way to climb up.

Chapter 1: Encounter

“Interesting. This ability really comes in handy.”

Shellmi: A highly effective medicinal herb. Contains a high amount of magical energy.

When I focused my gaze on a pretty flower growing by a tree’s roots, its data popped into my brain. That was how the Analysis ability worked, huh? I’d figured out that my evil-looking left eye was actually responsible for the trait, meaning it wasn’t just for show. Cool?

Exploding Panther Cap: If you eat it, you’ll blow up.

Hot damn. Talk about a dangerous shroom.

I’d been using the Analysis ability to learn more about everything I’d seen so far, but there was just way too much awesome stuff in this new world. Shocker, I know. I’d managed to find a lot of grasses and fruits that were safe to eat, though. It was nice to know I didn’t have to spend DP to survive.

Oh, right, that whole “study the geography of the area” thing. Yeah, I gave up on that real fast. Why? ’Cause a Maps feature showed up in my menu not long after I left the dungeon. Seriously, the interface has *got* to be a god or something.

Anyway, Maps was exactly what it sounded like—the interface captured every geographical feature that entered my field of vision and updated the feature accordingly. All I had to do was wander around enjoying the view, and the interface would do all the work to fill out a map of everywhere I went.

I learned something else about Maps too. Right now, the interface only notified me of intruders in the dungeon, but apparently, there was an upgrade

that showed enemies *everywhere*, even outside the dungeon. Unfortunately, though, the upgrade could only be bought with DP. Since I didn't have enough for it yet, I planned to save up and buy it as soon as I could. It'd be a huge advantage to have that feature, after all.

After exploring some more, I basically understood what the area looked like, so I decided to call it a day. The moment I turned around, though, something appeared out of thin air. I don't know why I even looked, but I couldn't help it. I heard the sound of wings flapping in the distance, and when I turned my head to see where it had come from, I saw a humongous creature soaring through the sky.

At first, I thought it was just a huge bird, but the minute I had that thought, it swooped straight down from the sky. It made a super-quick stop right above the ground, then landed surprisingly gracefully.

"Hooooly mackerel!"

The force of the wind it kicked up by flapping its wings made me unconsciously close my eyes. When it finally stopped, I gingerly opened my eyes again to learn more about the beast.

Name: Lefisios

Race: Ancient Dragon

Class: Supreme Dragon

Level: 987

Title: Conqueror of Dragonkind

What stood before me wasn't a bird, but a massive, lithe dragon with beautiful silver scales.

Wait. I'm sorry, what? No. Nope. Nuh-uh. No way. Not a chance. This was wrong. I need a second. No, make that a minute. This is not happening.

I knew logically that this was a completely different world from Earth, that it was much harsher and more dangerous, so I was totally ready to meet all kinds

of monsters and other magical beings here. But no way did I ever think my first encounter would be with a *dragon*, of all things!

Not to mention that it wasn't your run-of-the-mill dragon. That would have been too easy. No, instead, this was a freaking Ancient Dragon. It sounded insanely powerful from the race name alone. And because things could somehow get even worse, its class was Supreme Dragon. What the *actual* fuck? I thought this was supposed to be like one of those garbage games people clowned on!

Adding insult to injury was the fact that it was a blasted level 987. What kind of BS luck did I have to run into something that was pretty much maxed out?! It was literally—and I mean *literally*—987 times more powerful than me. I was still level 1! I couldn't even see what the rest of its attributes were, probably because of the enormous difference in our levels. I was a thousand percent screwed.

Damn. Okay, okay, calm down, me. I gotta calm down. Grandma always told me "Haste makes waste" and that nothing good ever comes from panicking. I technically didn't have a grandma here, but that's not the important part.

All right, thinking time. Maybe this was like one of those online games where some classes automatically started at a super-high level. If that was the case, it was still a threat, but not as absolutely massive of one since it might not actually have been 987 times stronger than me. Positive thinking for the win, I guess?

Now that I was in a better frame of mind—sort of—I realized I couldn't actually use Analysis to learn more about its race and class. Strange, but whatever. I tried using the ability on the dragon's title instead, which did get me some info.

Conqueror of Dragonkind: The most powerful dragon in the world, with no equal in existence. Possesses the unique ability Conqueror's Might, which temporarily buffs Lefisios's stats. The Supreme Dragon class is also unique to Lefisios.

Yeah, no shit. I could tell it was at the top of this world's food chain just by looking at it. Thanks for nothing, Captain Obvious. I swear, sometimes it felt like this damn interface was deliberately messing with me...

Hold on, though. Oh, damn, okay. It was all coming together. I'd known something wasn't right, but I wasn't able to put my finger on it until now. Armed only with the Analysis ability, I found it odd that even a noob like me could find plants to eat so easily. All I did was poke around anywhere I could, and *bam*, food.

And I just realized that it was so easy precisely because nothing and no one had gotten in my way. I hadn't felt so much as a hint of life the entire time I'd explored. No wonder I'd been—and still was—kinda disappointed, since I was looking forward to seeing what sorts of monsters lived here. That was one of the things the dungeon had “told” me when I'd touched the core.

I was guessing the local inhabitants knew about the dragon. They knew that something way more powerful than them was nearby. Made sense that they'd all flee if a creature like that chose to live here.

My brain was moving a mile a minute, but my body was actually frozen in place. My mouth was too, for that matter. The illogical part of me was completely overwhelmed by the sheer power emanating from the magnificent being in front of me.

Keeping me in its sight, the dragon opened its mouth.

“You there. Might you be a member of the demon clan? Perhaps even a high-ranking one?”

I couldn't say anything. But I could still think.

Shit! Balls! Fuck! Shit! It talked! Holy fucking shit!

I clapped my hands over my mouth to stifle the instinctive scream. Taking deep breaths to try to calm myself back down, I answered with all the composure I could fake without my voice cracking.

“Uh... Yeah. Yeah, I'm a demon. No clue how high my rank is, though. Don't

even know if I'm ranked at all, actually."

Since my race was classified as Archdemon, I was positive that I was a demon, if nothing else. This world had all the same monsters in it that every other fantasy world did. On top of demons like my current self, nonhuman species like elves and dwarves existed, as well as humanoid ones with animal ears and tails. If I ever met one of those animal hybrids, I definitely wanted to pet them. And I sure wouldn't mind nibbling on an elf's ear to get them all embarrassed.

God, I'm a freak. I gotta calm the hell down. I'm losing my grip on reality.

"Hm? What a peculiar manner of speech. But that is neither here nor there. Now then, pray tell why a high demon loiters in these parts?"

I knew it didn't really matter, but the dragon's voice was a lot prettier than I ever would have guessed. I kind of had the feeling it was a girl dragon.

"Why? I'm, uh...exploring?"

"What a strange demon you are."

I could hear a little bit of surprise in the dragon's voice, but nothing that made it feel like she was on the verge of attacking me. Not at the moment, anyway. Maybe, just maybe, this world's demons weren't particularly hostile toward others? The only reason that thought even crossed my mind was that the dragon talked to me way more casually than I was expecting.

The truth was, the information the dungeon implanted in me didn't include anything detailed about my surroundings. I only had very basic knowledge about living things, like the fact that there were both wild beasts and intelligent species like humans and demi-humans here. But even though the dungeon understood the difference in that sense, it still lumped all living things together and thought of every single one of them as a nasty creature out to destroy it. Hence I didn't actually know anything about the life-forms of this world.

Between that hole in my knowledge and what I knew from Earth, I automatically assumed that other species here viewed demons as enemies. But standing here now, in front of this humongous dragon, I seriously hoped that the saying about "when you assume" was true. I was totally fine with being an ass if it meant I got to live.

“Hmph. It matters not. All that you see before you is my domain, and I do not suffer trespassers. Your tale ends here, demon.”

Goddammit. The one time I wanted to be wrong. The moment my sliver of hope was completely destroyed, a thick aura of bloodlust started to fill the air. I could feel the killing intent instantly, even though I’d never been in a real fight. A cold sweat ran down my forehead. No ifs, ands, or buts about it—this was bad. An absolute freaking nightmare.

What was I supposed to do? What in the actual bloody mary was I supposed to do? I’d hardly ever used my brain in my old life, but now I desperately forced every single rusty neuron to fire at full capacity. I needed a way out of this situation, and I needed it fast.

Just when I thought my second chance at life was about to end, I suddenly caught a whiff of something sweet wafting from the silver dragon’s mouth. I didn’t know if it was because of this new form, but my sense of smell was way stronger than it had been when I was a human. Something sweet... Got it!

“Wait!” I shouted, holding my hands up in surrender. I turned toward the dragon, who was readying herself to erase me from existence.

“For what reason?”

Curious enough to show me some mercy, the dragon paused her attack and waited for me to answer. Didn’t think that’d work, but I sure as heck wasn’t going to complain. A few more seconds of life was better than nothing.

“You’re way out of my league. There’s no way I can fight you and win. I don’t even *want* to fight you! And I definitely don’t want to die! So how ’bout a trade instead?”

“Oh? A trade, you say?”

“Yup. You like sweet things, right?”

The minute I asked that, Miss Dragon suddenly started panicking. Her reaction was so surprising that it almost made me laugh out loud.

“I-I know not what you utter! As if a being of my station would ever devour a beehive for a meal! H-How dare you?!”

Ah ha! So she was a bad liar. Good to know.

“Except that a certain red-shirt-wearing bear can probably smell the honey on your breath from all the way in his woods.”

“D-Does such a bear truly exist...?”

“He does! Well, he *did*, I guess. Anyway, I have just the thing for you, since you love sweets so much. Here you go.”

With that, I called up my inventory, shoved my hand into the tear in space it created, and pulled out, drumroll please...a chocolate bar. Real talk, it was one of the things I bought with my DP when I was getting everything ready right before I left the throne room. I’d planned on eating it as a snack if I got hungry while I was exploring, since chocolate was supposed to be filling. Well, that was what I’d heard on some random show, that chocolate was the best when hiking or mountain climbing.

“A-And what, pray tell, would that be? It certainly smells appetizing...”

“This is called ‘chocolate.’ Try a piece.”

I tore off the shiny wrapper and tossed a square to the silver dragon. She caught it in her mouth and swallowed it right away.

“Mmm! What an utterly indulgent flavor! I-I could never have imagined a sweetness so heavenly!”

With that one bite, the dragon’s eyes widened in amazement. She made a face like she’d been struck by lightning. Huh. Not that it mattered, but she was incredibly expressive for a dragon. I couldn’t believe something as simple as chocolate would make her so ridiculously happy. Her dignified attitude had done a complete 180. It was almost enough to make me let down my guard. Almost.

Like hell had I forgotten that she was basically a thousand times stronger than me. Like hell could I ignore the fact that she could literally kill me with a single swipe if she wanted to. So, yeah, there was no way I could relax yet. I had to use my nerves to keep the negotiations going instead of letting them get the best of me.

“All right, let’s get down to business. I can make this stuff, and I’m pretty sure I’m the only one in this world who can. I mean, you’ve never seen it before, right?”

“Yes, you would be correct.”

It’d be another story if others like me also existed in this world, but I was assuming that wasn’t the case. Besides, even if there were others like me, I doubt there were that many. I mean, come on, what were the chances of someone else from another world also being a dungeon master here? Slim to none, probably.

“Then you know that if you kill me, you’ll never get to eat chocolate again. But if you let me go, you can visit me anytime you feel like eating some.”

I’d have to use more DP than I wanted to buy chocolate for her, but breaking the bank was waaay better than being eaten alive. Plus, since the locals seemed intent on avoiding her, if she started visiting on the regular, she could end up being a natural deterrent for other monsters. This was all hypothetical, of course, but it was better than nothing.

“I have two conditions. One, you don’t kill me. Two, you let me live here. Well, not *here* here. I live just beyond that cave over there, the one you can just barely see from here.”

“Hmm...”

Obviously conflicted, the silver dragon considered my deal. I could feel her struggling. I think I had her right where I wanted her. He shoots, he scores...?

“It’s pretty simple, don’t you think? All you have to do is let me live, and you get to eat this whenever you want. I don’t want to die, so you’d be doing me a real favor. It’s a win-win.”

“Win... I do not understand this ‘win-win.’”

“It means we both get what we want. So, what do you say?”

The dragon opened and closed her mouth a few times, staring at me the whole time. Was that a tic or was she imagining how she’d rip me apart with her teeth? In any case, after a bit more of that, she looked like she’d made her

choice.

“Well... I see no harm in doing as you say. Thus do I agree to your terms. You live to see another day, demon.”

Damn straight I do! I was ready to pump my fist, but I realized our discussion wasn't over yet, so I quickly controlled myself. I needed to calm down and get this done.

“With our bargain made, I expect you to supply me with a great deal of this ‘chaw-ko-let.’”

“Weeell... That's going to be impossible. Since you're so massive, there's no way I can just give you a ton of chocolate whenever you want.”

“There is truth to your words. Hmm... Understood.”

With a decisive nod, the silver dragon suddenly started glowing. When the light disappeared, a young girl with silver hair was standing in front of me.

“What the...?”

The girl had beautiful, bewitching silver hair and glittering, gemlike silver eyes to match. Her face was so symmetrical that it almost seemed like an artisan doll-maker had delicately crafted every feature, and her skin was so pale I could practically see through it. Her dainty, slender arms and legs made her look even more like a doll.

Based on her appearance alone, she looked like she was thirteen or fourteen years old. As far as her height, she was about a head shorter than me. She had looks that were practically right out of a dream—the same kind of beauty that launched a thousand ships. But for as much as she seemed like a human girl, the eye-catching horns thrusting out of her head and the long tail growing from her lower body said otherwise. So I was right about her being, well, a her.

“Is something the matter? That foolish expression on your face bears great resemblance to a goblin's.”

“Oh, uh... No, it's nothing. I just didn't know you could take that form too.”

“Hmph. Is that all? I have lived for many years. It was only natural that I learned the art of human transformation. In this form, I do not require nearly as

much sustenance.”

Wow, so she really was an Ancient Dragon. The Analysis info was spot-on, after all. It made sense that a race like hers would be capable of something like transforming into another species. Well, it made sense in this world.

“Now then, demon, as we agreed! I command you to hand over more of that ‘chaw-ko-let’!”

Like any spoiled brat, she waved both arms around, demanding her treat. Dignity shmignity, huh?

“J-Just wait a sec. Put this on first.”

I took off my T-shirt and tossed it her way.

“Hm? What might this be? Oh, your garments?”

“I can’t look at you while you look like that.”

Yup, you guessed it. She was buck naked in her human form. But I mean, why wouldn’t she be? It wasn’t like she wore clothes when she was a dragon.

It could’ve been worse, though. Lucky for me, everything about her, from her shortness to her total lack of curves, made her look like someone’s little sister. If she’d taken on a form that was, shall we say, more mature, I would have been in big trouble. I wasn’t nearly gross enough to go into the specifics of what kind of trouble, though. Let’s just say that certain parts of me would have reacted inappropriately to a “womanly” form and leave it at that.

Seemed the silver dragon girl had found me out too, if her smirk was anything to go by. She may have looked like a kid, but like she said, she’d lived a very long life. Using that eternity of experience, she moved seductively toward me. A weaker man would have had his will broken by her provocation, but not me. I just had to deal with the fact that this girl was going to be trouble, even if it was a different kind of trouble.

“Well, perhaps I will wear this then. I certainly have no wish to be attacked by someone overcome with lust upon gazing at my captivating figure. But in exchange, I demand immediate payment in the form of that brown—”

“Okay, okay, I get it! I’ll give you the chocolate, so put it on already!”

“And thus, your oath is sworn. Though I must admit, this cloth feels quite nice. Oh? What are these rents on the back?”

“Forget about that and just put it on!”



“Mm, I see. So you are a demon lord, and a newborn one at that.”

As the silver dragon girl spoke, she wandered curiously around the throne room. She was still pretty much naked despite the T-shirt, which, combined with her personality, was weirdly seductive. Of course, I was half-naked too, since I’d given her my shirt. I knew that if we were still on Earth, this sort of thing would seem illegal. There was no doubt in my mind they’d have locked me up and thrown away the key. Good thing we weren’t on Earth, then.

Anyway, I actually hadn’t planned on bringing her to the dungeon. I wasn’t sure how she was going to react when I told her I was a demon lord, so my initial idea had been to feel out the situation. But then she refused to stop yelling about wanting to eat more chocolate **now**, which meant she basically bullied me into giving up. So, here we were.

Eh, I guess it was inevitable we’d end up back here seeing as I couldn’t use the DP Catalog outside of the dungeon. Plus, I didn’t think it was a big deal if she knew about this place. I wasn’t really getting an “I must kill the demon lord!” vibe from her, so I probably didn’t need to be super cautious. Probably. Hopefully.

Anyway, I opened the Catalog because I figured I might as well get some proper clothes for her. Oh, wait, did it even have stuff for girls? Yup. I found girls’ apparel as soon as I started scrolling through the clothing section.

Wow, the Catalog really *did* have everything. It made it way too easy to spend recklessly, to the point that I’d been feeling like I’d blow all my DP in an instant. Case in point, half my DP was already gone, so I seriously needed to rein it in.

Shopping habits aside, I bought all the things she needed and they appeared magically out of thin air. I tossed everything her way—a dress, underwear for girls (as if I could ignore that), and sandals to match since she couldn’t be walking around barefoot.

“You get why you need clothes, right?”

“Indeed. I thank you. I seem to have completely forgotten that human skin affords no protection against the cold... Nevertheless, I find it quite intriguing that I could not feel the dungeon’s power until I stepped through the door, yet am now awash in its energy. If you are the only inhabitant of this deep dungeon and it comprises only this one room, then I conclude you must be a newborn demon lord. I begin to understand why the demon clan has suddenly reappeared in my domain.”

While she chattered away excitedly, the silver dragon girl got naked, tossed my T-shirt back to me, and started changing into her new clothes. I wasn’t looking, okay? I totally had my back turned. Totally. I just *assumed* she was naked after the shirt came flying my way. Can we drop it already? Jeez.

No joke, though, she figured everything out right away. I didn’t think she would, but that was on me for underestimating the power of someone who’d lived for so long. She specifically mentioned the dungeon’s power, so did that mean there were different kinds of magical powers? It had to, because Magic was an attribute in my Stats window, and I was hoping to solve that particular puzzle sooner rather than later. Plus, since magical powers existed, then there had to be a way to use them, which, hell yeah, I wanted to do spells and jawns.

“Wait, hold on. You said ‘reappeared.’ Is it normal for demons to just appear out of thin air?”

“Indeed. Though a vast number of demons are born naturally from mated pairs in today’s age, they first originated in regions saturated with mana. An unknown catalyst would force that mana to gather into an essence, then take the form of a living being centered around said essence.”

“What do you mean, ‘essence’?”

“Hmm. By and large, most essences crystallize as magical jewels. Regarding your existence, however, I suspect the essence here may be another matter altogether. I believe this dungeon’s essence lies in its power to create a demon lord to be its caretaker. And with that necessary element in place, the mana in the vicinity would have further coalesced, to the point that the dungeon itself was born. This area is bathed in a great deal of magical energy, so the

conditions for both its birth and yours were unrivaled.”

“Really? I guess demons are pretty amazing then.”

“Ha! Their existence provides me with endless amusement, you may be certain of that. But I must say, this particular dungeon exhibits a refined aura I have never before encountered.”

The dragon girl touched everything she could with her small hands while she spoke.

“Seriously? They aren’t all like this?”

My voice was muffled as I responded since I was putting my T-shirt back on.

“Indeed. All of the dungeons I have destroyed out of boredom could only be described as poorly decorated caverns. Although... I do recall a particularly imbecilic demon who would boast about being the strongest in the world. His castle reflected his abominable taste in, well, everything.”

Shiiit, so she *had* gone on rampages. Man, it really was a stroke of luck that I figured out she had a sweet tooth. If I hadn’t, I’d have gone right back to the afterlife on day two of being reborn. Wild.

Then again, I didn’t think I was ever in all that much danger anyway, because I didn’t think she was ever actually planning to kill me. I got the feeling she’d only wanted to threaten me and drive me out of her territory. She probably *would* have killed me if I’d tried anything stupid, so I was guessing she deliberately waited me out to see what I’d do. And I’m pretty sure killing me wasn’t what had her hesitating in the first place when we negotiated; she was probably just trying to decide whether she was willing to let me have this cave, what with it being in her territory and all.

Either way, this dungeon was my new home. Never mind the fact that the core, the heart of the dungeon, was here too, so it wasn’t like I could escape even if I wanted to. At the end of the day, I’d say I did a damn good job handling her. All’s well that ends well or whatever.

Now, let me get back to what she’d said so far. She mentioned that this room was a lot more “refined” than others she’d seen. Isn’t that nice, my lovely dungeon? Complimented by a dragon. And a Supreme Dragon, no less!

“Oh, hey, so what happened to that idiot demon?”

“He insisted on challenging me, and I obliged by burning his castle to ash.”

Yeah, okay, that tracks. As if a clown like that had a chance in hell of winning any kind of fight with a supreme being like her. My fault for asking a dumb question, but I needed to know! I guessed my curiosity showed on my face, because she kept talking without me having to ask more potentially stupid questions.

“Though it is clear to me that you are nothing like him or the others. Indeed, you are a rarity amongst demons. Power means everything to a great many of them, and their way of life is shaped by that value. Thus, naturally, not only do they relish in fighting each other, but they endlessly challenge other races as well. In sum, demons are exceedingly belligerent, vexing insects.”

“Ahh, I getcha. Demons are basically meatheads, right?”

I didn’t have any reason to doubt her, so it turned out being a demon was basically part of being in a shit show. Why’d I have to end up as part of a race that didn’t get along with any of the others? Couldn’t a guy catch a break?

“What is a ‘meathead’?”

“They think with their muscles instead of their brains. You could also call them hotheaded idiots.”

“What an interesting term. It perfectly captures their existence. Yes, they have indeed been ‘meatheads’ for the better part of a thousand years now.”

“You’ve been alive that long?”

“Indeed. I have long since forgotten my precise age, but humans speak of me as a dragon of legend.”

With those words and a proud look on her face, she confidently folded her arms in front of her flat chest. Too bad the massive difference in lifespan and power between us still hadn’t sunk in, though. Part of that was probably because of her childlike personality, which completely contradicted all that arrogance. Plus, she loved sweets, so you couldn’t blame me for being baffled.

“Anyway, dragon, here’s what you wanted.”

I passed her a chocolate bar I'd bought from the DP Catalog.

"Long have I waited for this morsel! Mmm! Such a lush sweetness!" Based on the sounds she was making, she wasn't trying to hide her enjoyment at all. "And one more thing: my name is not 'dragon.' It is Lefisios. You may use it."

The dragon—no, Lefisios—slowly savored each bite of chocolate while she talked, using both hands to carefully break up the bar one small piece at a time. The complete opposite of devouring it in one go like she had earlier.

"Okay, but it's kinda long, so I'll go with Lefi instead. And you can call me Yuki. That's my name."

"'L-Lefi'?"

"What? You don't like it?"

"Th-That is not the case. However...you are the first to have given me a name such as that."

"Ahh, yeah, I think I get it."

A thousand-year-old ancient dragon who was basically a legend among humans wouldn't usually be called something like "Lefi." It would take some massive balls to get friendly with her, much less give her a nickname. I'd guess the reason I could treat her normally was because she felt like a younger cousin, a kid just hitting her growth spurt. Which was kinda hilarious considering how majestic she'd seemed when we first met.

"In any case, I have no objections. Now then, I have another matter to discuss. I shall reside here henceforth."

Lefi said that so ridiculously casually that it was almost like she hadn't just dropped a huge bomb on me.

"Say what now?"

"My current nest no longer suits me. As I am beginning to find it inconvenient, I have been considering a search for a new home. But this dungeon seems quite comfortable, and thus I shall make it my new abode."

"W-Wait! Just stop for a sec! You can't just decide that without asking me first!"

“Then you refuse?”

“Hold on, will you? I mean, c’mon, it isn’t that easy to—”

“Then you refuse...”

Lefi snuggled in close and looked up at me with sad, teary eyes. I felt like I’d kicked a puppy.

“It’s...fine.”

“Excellent answer!”

With that, she whirled around and jumped away from me with a cackle. The crocodile tears also disappeared as quickly as they’d come. Obviously in a great mood, she went back to eating her chocolate bar. I couldn’t help but laugh at how easily she’d just played me.

I might have been tricked into letting her stay, but it really wasn’t a bad deal. Even if she looked like a little girl now, the reality was extremely different. She was essentially an apex predator, seen as an exalted being far superior to any other. If someone like her wanted to stay here, then who was I to complain? With her around, the dungeon’s safety was all but guaranteed.

Yeah, that’s it. For sure. I’d analyzed the situation from every single angle and came to this conclusion strategically. I didn’t automatically say “yes” because Lefi gave me puppy-dog eyes and I thought it was adorable. No way was I that much of a sucker. I was the king of my own castle, okay? Let’s just leave it, damn.

And that, folks, was how I ended up with a supreme dragon freeloading in my dungeon.



The next day, I stood in the cave, just outside the door to the throne room.

“All right, let’s do this!”

I opened the menu and tapped the Dungeon category. The reason I’d come out here was because I wanted to look into what I’d been putting off: testing the dungeon’s features. I was reborn as its lord in order to take care of it, but I hadn’t used any of its functions yet.

Now a part of the weird dungeon family, Lefi the mooch slept the day away in the throne room. She wouldn't get off my case last night about wanting her own futon, so I gave in and bought her one. Surprisingly enough, she took an immediate liking to it. Didn't take her long to pass out once she got in it, and boy did she sleep like a rock. I kinda wanted to poke her to see what would happen, but figured I should "let sleeping dragons lie" or whatever that saying is.

The first feature I wanted to try was expansion. It asked me to set a range, so I chose this cave.

"Damn, that's cool."

This was one of the dungeon's powers, huh? I couldn't see any physical changes, but I'd definitely felt the atmosphere shift. Before, all I'd felt was the natural coldness of the cave, but that had quickly transformed into warmth and calmness. The sudden change made it easy to understand how strong the dungeon's magic was, even if it was a pretty small expansion.

I decided to double-check my map and yup, the cave was part of the dungeon's territory now.

Sweet! I couldn't wait to expand the dungeon even more. *Now, let's see about leveling the dungeon up... Hmm, not enough DP. I'll have to do that later, then.*

Speaking of DP, I got a pretty nice surprise when I saw the number earlier this morning. And I was pretty sure it had to do with how the dungeon views Lefi. Specifically, it considers her an invader instead of my subordinate. When I'd gone to bed last night, I had less than 500 DP. But then this morning, I had over 2,000. That was a *massive* increase, and it only took one night!

When she'd first decided to live with me in the dungeon, I wasn't sure how things would work out. Spoilers: it wasn't bad at all. Hell, it was literally the best-case scenario, and I'd never even considered it! I'd known I was going to have to entertain her as long as she stuck around, and I'd been ready to do that no matter how little I wanted to, but for DP gains like these she could expect service with a big ol' smile.

"Okay, I'll try summoning next."

To be honest, I had the feeling that I probably didn't need anyone or anything else with Her Majesty The Conqueror of Dragonkind by my side, but I also couldn't resist the temptation, so I opened the monster catalog in the Dungeon section and scrolled through it. Since this was my first attempt, I decided that the best option was whatever cost the least DP. I skimmed through the long list of monster names, then tapped on the one at the very bottom.

The moment I did, particles of light appeared and started to swirl around, then combined. When the light disappeared, it left behind a transparent blue ball—a slime.



“Well, whaddya know? This thing is cuter than I expected.”

It was a little smaller than most small dog breeds, so it was pretty tiny. When I gave it a light poke, its body jiggled in response. And judging by the way it grabbed on to me playfully, I think it understood that I was the one who’d summoned it. Definitely way too adorable. It reminded me of a dog someone I knew on Earth had.

“I’ll call you Shii!”

Name: Shii

Race: Slime

Class: None

Level: 1

HP: 11/11

MP: 2/2

Strength: 15

Stamina: 37

Agility: 26

Magic: 11

Dexterity: 52

Luck: 110

Abilities: Predation 1, Regeneration 1

Title: Demon Lord’s Subordinate

Hmm. Surprise, surprise, Shii was weak. That was fine though; it was cute, so I didn’t mind. I’d think of it as my pet.

According to my mental wiki, monsters like Shii that are “born of the dungeon itself” don’t need food because they “feed off of the dungeon’s magic power.” A pet I didn’t have to buy food for? Sweet deal. Then again, that being the

default made sense when I thought about it—the dungeon wouldn't want to waste its lord's resources by making the lord feed every single summoned monster.

Wait a freaking minute. Shii's Luck is higher than mine? What the hay, man? Eh, maybe I'll feel better if I just think of it as my Luck being stupidly low. Of course mine seems low compared to someone—or in this case something—else's. Yeah, that's it. My luck isn't lower than a slime's, the slime's just happens to be higher than mine, right? Right.

Yeah, no, that didn't help at all. It made me kinda depressed to know for sure that my Luck was actually complete garbage. Then Shii abruptly started wiggling on the ground, moving toward me. It slinked onto my feet and tried to nuzzle me.

“Shii, are you...trying to comfort me?”

It bounced up and down, which I was guessing meant “yes.” Oh my freaking God, how much cuter could it get? I didn't think I'd ever met anything this precious until now. Shii's actions gave me the swift kick in the ass I needed to stop moping and start thinking clearly.

I was wrong to care so much about something as silly as my Luck stat. I knew it didn't actually matter. I was able to meet Shii even with it being what it was, so luck meant nothing to me. I wasn't unlucky or cursed or anything like that. The minute a person thought they were unlucky, that was exactly how they ended up.

Besides, even if bad things *did* end up happening to me, I knew good things would happen too. And those good things would seem all the more amazing in comparison, which would make me even happier. Thinking about it like that, I actually felt luckier than others. Maybe. Probably?

Anyway, thanks to Shii, I'd just learned a universal truth. That was pretty cool.

Okay, enough introspection for today! Now it was time to deepen my friendship with Shii since it so graciously came into my life!

And so, some time passed as I played with my new friend. But all of a sudden, my map opened on its own to warn me of a hostile presence. At the same time,

I heard a beastly growl coming from the cave's sole opening.

"Grrrr!"

I immediately raised my head to look toward the source of the sound. What greeted me was a terrifying monster with three wolf heads that looked like it'd been created using dark magic. All three heads glared menacingly at me while all three jaws snarled and snapped ferociously. It was gigantic—about the size of a lion, maybe even bigger. I used Analysis to read its data.

Race: Cerberus

Level: 32

So this was an actual monster. Just like when I'd met Lefi, I couldn't see any of its other stats. Just like back then, it was probably because its level was so much higher than mine. I felt my body tense up at the sight of my dungeon's first intruder.

Well, it was pretty much inevitable. I was bound to meet a real monster sooner or later. I just wished it would have been later.

I could feel Shii trembling in fear near my feet, but despite its terror, it jumped in front of me. It was like it was trying to threaten the attacker instead. My tiny slime friend didn't have a face, of course, but I could tell it was scowling at the damn monster mutt. I felt like I was in a scene from that show. You know, the one with the kid in the hat who wanted to be the very best.

"W-Wow, Shii! You're an amazing bodyguard!" I couldn't help but shout when I saw Shii acting so brave. Seemed like it heard the admiration in my voice too, because it shook itself like it was trying to assure me that it would handle the beast.

You know what? Shii was right. It didn't matter if the enemy was stronger than us; our mission was to destroy anything that stood in our way! I was ready and willing to go all David and Goliath on the thing right here, right now.

I hadn't actually played any of the games related to the show with the yellow mouse, but I *had* played other battle games. The best part of those games was

always using my brains and skills to take down high-level enemies, so show me what you've got, Shii!

"Shii, attack! Fast as lightning!"

Okay, so it came as no surprise that Shii wasn't as fast as lightning. Even so, it boldly tried to follow my order. With a bounce, it flew toward the monster—but the Cerberus easily countered our attack by using one of its forelegs to slap Shii away like a bug. Shii slammed against the cave wall, slid to the floor with a squishy sound, and stopped moving.

"Ahhh! What did you do to my buddy, you son of a bitch?!"

If I'd been thinking rationally, I would have known that there was no way Shii and I could beat a Cerberus, but I was so pissed off now that I couldn't think straight. After seeing what happened to Shii, everything went red. I threw caution to the wind and let my rage take over, rushing straight toward the Cerberus and Sparta-kicking the everlovin' stuffin' out of it.

I drove my foot into its torso over and over, but the piece of shit mongrel didn't even try to dodge my attacks. In fact, it didn't react at all. And then, out of nowhere, its body exploded, pieces of flesh flying everywhere.

"What the hell...?"

The blood and guts painted the cave red. I was still pissed, so I had fully intended to keep attacking, but my anger faded and a little bit of my sanity came back when I finally noticed the unexpected outcome.

Whoa, it's over? Seriously?

I looked at what was left of the nasty-ass carcass. I'd definitely sent that worthless dog to its next life because it was beyond dead. Not even a single twitch.

What had even happened? When I thought about it, I realized that even though I had heightened senses as a demon, they hadn't given me any sort of advanced warning about the Cerberus. It had happened with Lefi too—I didn't know either of them was there until they were basically on top of me.

Still, I thought it'd be way stronger than me given the 30-plus level gap.

Although... I might have figured out why I'd managed to defeat it. At first, I'd guessed that the reason the Cerberus had hunkered down in that immovable stance was because it thought I was too weak to do any damage, but maybe it actually *couldn't* move because it couldn't keep up with the speed of my attack?

Up until now, I didn't have anything else to compare my stats to. But seeing what had just happened, maybe they'd actually gone up a bunch? Hoping that they had, I pulled up my stats again.

Name: Yuki

Race: Archdemon

Class: Demon Lord

Level: 12

HP: 2,320 / 2,320

MP: 6,900 / 6,900

Strength: 672

Stamina: 701

Agility: 574

Magic: 915

Dexterity: 1,273

Luck: 70

Ability Points: 17

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 1, Unarmed Combat 1

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World

Dungeon Points (DP): 2,250

As a result of fighting an enemy at a way higher level than me, my stats *did* go up like crazy, just like I'd suspected. It had even earned me a new ability:

Unarmed Combat. No change in my Luck, though, huh? Whatever. I'd ignore that for the time being. Instead, I needed to focus on how the rest of my stats might have actually been stronger than what the numbers said they were.

But, well, it's all relative, as the saying goes. I knew there were still bigger fish to fry out there, other creatures with better stats than mine. I mean, I *did* have a legendary fish—okay, dragon—living with me, after all.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't tempted to go out there and see if I could beat down more monsters like the Cerberus, but I also knew that it would be incredibly stupid to get a big head now. I sure didn't want to end up like the morons who'd challenged Lefi and got turned to literal ash for being too cocky.

When someone's ego blows up because they think they've got S-tier stats, that's the first clue that they're headed for the dark side. And once they start down that typical villain's path, it always leads to the typical villain's monologue, and then they die. I wasn't about to throw away my second chance at life over something as stupid as that. Not a chance in hell.

Wait, dagnabbit! That definitely wasn't what I needed to think about right now!

"Shii!"

I closed the stats menu in a panic and rushed to my adorable pet's side. Crouching down, I saw that its HP wasn't completely gone, which was a good sign. And thanks to its regenerative ability, Shii was slowly reforming its body.

"Man, what a relief..." I sighed, thankful that my friend was still kicking. With that thing as its first opponent, no duh it got its ass kicked. *Sorry for making you do something so reckless, little bud...*

Sensing my guilt and anxiety, Shii wiggled itself gently like it was trying to say, "It's okay! I'm fine!" It still wanted to comfort me even though it only got hurt because of me. Jeez, what a loveable little thing. I knew that Shii's shakes and jiggles every time it "responded" to me might not have seemed like real communication, but I honestly felt like it was, like I *could* actually understand it.

That's how I came to the conclusion that Shii was better off being a pet. And pets weren't meant to fight; they were meant to be loved. I'd do the fighting

from here on out. Yeah, that was the right move.

Now that I was feeling calmer, I could think properly. I'd destroyed that damn dog on emotion alone, but there was no way I could do it again. If I tried, I'd probably end up getting caught off guard and bada bing bada boom, second life over.

What did the Brits used to say back on Earth? "Keep calm and carry on"? That's exactly what I need to do from now on.

Still deciding on what to do next, I sat down and waited for Shii to complete its regeneration.



"Hmm..."

I'd been keeping the throne warm for a while now, with the menu humming in front of me.

"Is something the matter? You gaze so ardently at the empty space before you."

Lefi turned toward me with a puzzled look on her face, waiting for me to answer. Until she asked me that question, she'd been poking Shii's body incessantly while talking to it. I vaguely remembered her saying stuff about how "intriguing" it was, that she'd never met a slime until now, and what a "splendid creature" Shii was.

"Nah, it's nothi— Wait, what do you mean, 'empty space'?"

She couldn't see the interface?

"How shall I say it...? All I saw was you gazing at nothing like a simpleton. Ah, I see now. Perhaps you were reading your own attributes? I am quite certain you possess the Analysis ability as well."

Lefi said that like she finally understood what I'd been doing.

"Then that means you have it too, Lefi?"

"Indeed. It is quite a convenient ability. If you master it, you obtain the power to comprehend all of creation. There exist only a handful of beings who have

trained themselves to that level, however.”

“The first time you realized I was a demon lord was when you came here yesterday, right? But if you have Analysis too, doesn’t that mean you knew from the get-go?”

“No. At our first meeting, I thought you were merely a lesser demon who had heedlessly wandered into my territory. I saw no meaning in using Analysis on inconsequential vermin. And after our negotiations, my mind was drowning in the pleasure wrought by that mud-colored confection. So, naturally, I did not remember to use Analysis at all... Ahhh, Yuki, I desire more of that chocolate.”

“You’re definitely gonna get cavities at this rate.”

“Preposterous. Have you forgotten that I am an ancient dragon? It is impossible for abnormalities such as that to afflict me.”

So she considered cavities anomalies? Huh. Kinda crazy that she’d never had one. Putting that aside, per Her Majesty’s request, I opened the DP Catalog, bought a treat, and tossed it her way.

“Oh? And what might this be?”

“Cookies. Tear the bag open and eat them.”

“Understood... Mmm! These are quite scrumptious as well! Leaving my nest to live here was most assuredly a good decision! The freedom to eat such lovely sweets, the heavenly comfort of sleeping in a futon—I never knew living as a human could be so wondrously easy!”

She devoured the cookies like a happy little kid. I couldn’t help smiling wryly at the sight of the silver-haired girl excitedly munching away. They were a lot cheaper than chocolate too, so if she wasn’t complaining, I wasn’t complaining.

“So, tell me why you scrutinized your data in such a concerned manner.”

“I wasn’t concerned so much as I was thinking that I’d like to use magic. My Magic stat seems pretty high, so I *should* be able to use it, but...”

I’d had this thought running through my head ever since witnessing the bloodbath I caused when I killed that cursed dog. I could tell I had pretty high physical power, but I also knew that there were other, stronger monsters out

there.

The ones who invaded dungeons were the types whose only purpose was fighting. I didn't think I could beat those kinds. At least, not the way I was now. I mean, c'mon, I was basically a combat virgin. Just because I had the Conqueror of Dragonkind as an ally didn't mean I could have her do all the dungeon protecting. If I sat back and relied entirely on her, I knew it would just cause an endless cycle of attack and retaliation from enemies. They wouldn't be able to resist trying to take her down along with me and the dungeon.

Without anyone asking me first, I suddenly got thrown into a world where everyone struggled desperately to stay alive. In order for me to survive in this world too, I had to dedicate myself to getting stronger. I had to do the work myself.

I just remembered a line from one of the Servants in that famous gacha game: "What is a king without an ego?" But I understood that those with that kind of mindset only wound up dead. If I wanted to live, I couldn't think like them.

At the end of the day, this world was harsh. With that being the reality, having power definitely wasn't a bad thing. And seeing as I was in this new world anyway, no reason to not get that power through magic.

As far as my stats went, I could tell my Magic value was considerably higher than others. It was practically *begging* me to use it. Why, then, didn't I summon more powerful monsters to serve me? Well, the long and short of it is that I just wanted to use magic. Nothing more, nothing less.

The issue was that I didn't know how. I tried shouting famous attack lines like "Ka-me-ba-me-ba!" and "Platinum Star! The Planet!" but it did absolutely nothing. Kidding! I'm kidding! Of course I didn't do that. But the fact that I'd gotten the Unarmed Combat ability just from stomping that dog to death had me thinking. Maybe it was possible to do something similar to obtain magical abilities? If I tried to do magic, then the magic would show up. That was the hope.

What even *was* magic, though? In this world, that is. Since I could sense the dungeon's magic, I figured I should be able to do the same with my own. No dice, though, so I honestly had no clue. I tried meditation, thinking it might help

me tap into my magic, but all I could hear was Lefi playing with Shii. Did that mean I was going about this the wrong way? I snapped back to reality when Lefi started talking again.

“Hmm, yes, I would say your magic is stronger than most others’. Oh? Well, now *this* is indeed a surprise. The value increased. Did you perchance defeat a monster while I slumbered?”

“Yeah, I did. So, uh, hey, I want to ask you something. Just out of curiosity, what do you think about my stats?”

“The range in your attributes varies widely, but I would rank you equal to the creatures living in the southern reaches of this wood. Though I would be remiss if I did not tell you there are many who are more powerful than you. Regardless, your values measure less than a hundredth of my own!”

Lefi cackled when she said that last part. Less than a hundredth, huh...? While I tried to work through the shock of finally knowing the exact difference in our power levels, Lefi managed to finish all the cookies. She kept sneaking disappointed-looking glances at me, which meant that it was time to see what she was up to.

“I will take pity and deign to teach you how to use magic. Naturally, however, the lessons will come at a price. I require a suitable reward—”

Without a word, I bought another bag of cookies from the Catalog and threw it to the dragon girl.

“Excellent! Then our pact is made. Under my tutelage, you shall become the greatest mage of this era.”

My Luck might not have been the greatest, but it was good enough to land me a supreme dragon that was super easy to handle.

“Let us begin. The first step is to feel the magic. Extend both of your hands.”

“Huh? Oh, okay.”

While she spoke, Lefi clapped the cookie crumbs from her hands. I wasn’t really sure what was happening, but I still did as she said. The silver-haired girl grabbed my hands with her tiny, soft ones, and—

“What? Whaaaat?! Whooooaaa!!!”



Out of nowhere, a ton of power started flowing from Lefi's velvety-smooth right hand into my left one. The power spread through my whole body, then went down my right arm and back to her through her left hand. Just like that, the current kept looping between me and Lefi. Round and round it went, through me, then back to her, and back to me again. Magic. A different kind of magic, but still magic.

Unlike the dungeon's magic, which filled the air around us, Lefi's magic took the form of a huge rush of power. It stormed through my body like a herd of wild horses. I felt like I'd collapse under its insane strength if I lost my focus for even a second.

After a few more minutes of that, Lefi gradually started decreasing the amount of magic she was pouring into me. Once she cut off the flow entirely, she let go of my hands. The second she did, my knees buckled and I dropped to the floor, breathing heavily.

My heart was pounding so hard it actually hurt. The whole experience had only lasted a few minutes, but it left me feeling like I'd run a fifty-meter dash a hundred times back-to-back. I was so exhausted I could barely move.

"Hmm, you did well."

The curious look on Lefi's face as she said that made me think of a scientist observing a lab rat.

"Wh-What do...you mean?"

I could hear her more clearly now that my breathing had started to go back to normal. Her tone was so casual that she almost sounded indifferent.

"It is quite simple—I used my magic to forcibly activate your own. If you had been unable to endure my prodigious energy, your head would have burst from the pressure and you would have died instantly. But instead, you bore my magic, so you did well."

"What the hell, Lefi?! Are you serious?! How could you do something so terrifying to me?!"

I lashed out in the heat of the moment, but the silver-haired dragon girl

waved her hands around like my outburst didn't even bother her.

"I concluded that a high-ranking demon such as yourself would be able to withstand my power. And my judgment was correct, was it not? Now then, I wish for you to attempt that exercise on your own, while you can still recall the sensation. I firmly believe you will execute the task deftly."

I wasn't super happy with her explanation, but I got back on my feet anyway. Then, I closed my eyes and tried to do what she said.

Wh-Whoa. I can feel it.

Before Lefi flooded me directly with her power, I'd never gotten a single response from my magic no matter how hard I tried. But now, I could actually feel it in the pit of my stomach.

Holding on to that connection, I tried to stimulate my magic like she had. It was kinda hard to describe the process, but picture using a spoon to stir water in a glass. At first, there's some resistance, and the water swirls slowly, but then the more you stir, the faster the water moves. That was how it felt to awaken my magic. By the time I managed to get a handle on the rush of power, it was cycling smoothly throughout my entire body, just like blood did.

This time, I didn't feel like I was going to pass out, most likely because I was controlling my own power instead of having someone else's forced into me. The best analogy I could think of was being the driver in a car versus being the passenger—you don't get carsick when you're the driver, but you sure do when you're the passenger. That said, I'd never actually driven a car, so I was just assuming that was how it felt.

"Yes, good. That is the first step to bringing forth your magic. What you have just achieved represents the foundation of learning to use it."

Lefi kept talking, but I was so focused on circulating my power through every cell in my body that I couldn't give her a real response.

"On to the next lesson. Envision my words in your mind for this new lesson. And when we complete that, I shall teach you a spell. Then, I will have you recite it back to me."

I nodded to show her I understood.

“First, think of a faraway land with vast plains.”

The untouched natural beauty I’d seen outside the dungeon yesterday popped immediately into my head.

“Now, take a flower from the many growing there. Tear off the stem and place the flower itself onto the palm of your hand.”

In my mind, I suddenly zoomed out from the imaginary field to look down at the imaginary flowers growing by my imaginary feet. I picked a flower at random and did as Lefi said.

“You see the vision in your mind, yes? Then extend your hand and chant the spell as I do. ‘Creation: Bloom.’”

“Creation: Bloom.”

The instant I muttered those words, some of the power rushing through my body condensed onto my left hand. When I finally sensed it settling down, I slowly opened my eyes.

“Oh, wow! What a pretty flower! Wait, are you shitting me?! A *flower*?!”

Without thinking, I chucked the flower that had materialized out of thin air at the floor to get rid of it. I didn’t even know how long it’d been there. Well, “chucked” wasn’t the right word. The flower had floated down on its own when I’d panicked and jerked my hand.

“What, are you dissatisfied with this magic?”

“No, no at all! Obviously I’m excited about my magic working! And on the first try too! But I was just wondering if there was something more. Like, why a flower? If it’d been something harder, I’m sure I would have *rose* to the occasion!”

Boom! Nailed it!

“Because you have only just begun your magical training. For your next lesson, imagine a flame. The spell is unnecessary on this occasion, simply envision using your magic to create the flame. Think of it clearly.”

“Got it.”

Just like Lefi commanded, I focused on activating my magic again. This time went a bit more smoothly than before, and I felt the power flowing through me again. Fire, she said? When I thought “fire,” the first thing that came to mind was a lighter.

In that case, I’d go with the Hippo lighter we had at home on Earth. I saw it in my head—I spun the flint, which ignited the oil, sparking the flame. I pictured the red glow dancing, flickering. I groaned as I pushed my power to the limit, intent on solidifying the flame in my mind. Then, without warning, a small amount of magic shot out of my body, and *whoosh*, a flame erupted from my pointer finger.

“Boo yeah!”

Th-That was so unbelievably cool! To me, at least. I guess if someone more powerful said it was lame, they wouldn’t be wrong. But whatever. What mattered was the fact that *literal freaking fire* was coming out of my finger.

I knew other guys would be just as excited as I was about this. There wasn’t a man alive who didn’t want to shoot fire from his fingertips. That was a fact and I would die on that hill. So, yeah, it wasn’t like I was being immature at all. No way, no how.

“Hmm, you certainly managed that effortlessly. As I thought, your being a demon means you excel at the use of magic.”

“Really?” I asked while still playing with the fire coming out of my finger. I put it out, then lit it up again. And again. My feelings of amazement still hadn’t disappeared. Maybe it was because I’d visualized a Hippo lighter when I first tried the spell, but even now, sparks flew every time I lit the flame. It really didn’t need to mirror how a lighter worked so closely, though... Eh, it looked cool, so it wasn’t a big deal.

“Indeed. I may have been the one to energize your magic, but your proficiency with it is solely your own doing. I believe that innate talent may be a special characteristic unique to high-ranking demons such as yourself.”

You know, she had a point there. I managed to use it more easily than I thought was possible. That in itself was strange because if I thought about it logically, it’d normally take years of hard training to learn how to use magic.

According to Lefi, demons first came into existence in areas rich with mana, so I suspected that a demon's physical composition meant a naturally strong affinity for magic. Otherwise, someone like me, who came from a world with no magic, wouldn't have been able to learn to use it so quickly. But at the end of the day, none of this mattered much to me. All I cared about was this fire magic.

I wondered if I could control the amount of fire. Lefi said picturing the thing you wanted to make was the most important step, so what would I need to think of...? Aha! A flamethrower!

There were a ton of joke weapons in a first-person shooter I played all the time in my old life, and one of them was a flamethrower. When it worked well, it worked *really* well, and when it didn't, it might as well have been a hunk of scrap metal. I liked it a lot despite it being unreliable, though, so being able to control my flame's output like I could control that flamethrower would have been awesome. Thinking about it now, I probably shouldn't have been thinking about it at all.

"Whooooaaa!"

Suddenly, a huge amount of magic rushed to my finger. With a violent *fwoom*, a fierce, massive blaze started jetting out. I jerked my finger away from my face in a panic, but I could still feel the intense heat. I was pretty sure some of my hair had gotten singed.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Shii, who'd been with us this whole time, suddenly start to flail. It almost felt like it was saying, "What the heck?! What should I do?!" With an agitated bob, it jumped away from us to safety.

"Damnation! You! Cease your magic at once!"

"B-B-But how?!"

"Stop its circulation!"

I did exactly as she said—I imagined reversing the direction of the power flowing through my body to cut off my magic. That seemed to work, because right after, the blaze started sputtering and eventually disappeared, like a fire-breathing dragon running out of steam. When the flames finally burned out,

Lefi, who'd rushed away in a panic, came back to me, heaving a relieved sigh.

"That made my blood run cold, you fool of a demon."

"Yeah, no argument there... I was so scared that I thought my heart was gonna jump out of my chest. S-Sorry about that."

"You must exercise strict control over your power. To be proficient in magic is to use it effectively. If you are reckless with it, you will only hurt yourself when it becomes too powerful to control."

"I-I get it. I get it, okay?"

A few more seconds, and I was pretty sure I would have melted my face off. It might have been best for me to stop using fire magic for a while. At least until I figured out the trick to it, anyway.

"In any event, you now understand how to use magic. The individual's imagination is the key; it is both the essence and the foundation of magic. Both humans and demons misunderstand this fundamental part of magic, and so they erroneously focus on chanting the spells, never realizing that the words merely function as aids. Unless you intend to absorb a great deal of magical energy through complex techniques, I think it best you concentrate on this vital rule. After all, I do not wish to see your potential wasted."

"Imagination, huh? We almost got barbecued because of what I pictured in my mind, so I'll definitely be careful from now on."

"See that you are."

Since that particular topic seemed to be done, I took the chance to ask Lefi a question about something that had been bugging me.

"So, I'm curious. I managed to materialize a flower and fire, but are there other things I can conjure up with magic?"

"That depends entirely on your nature. You seem to have an aptitude for earth and fire at the very least, but you will have to test yourself with the other elements. Only then will you know if you can command them as well."

"And what are these 'other elements'?"

"The four fundamentals are earth, fire, water, and wind. Be aware that these

are only simple categories to make understanding magic easier. They are certainly not absolute. Aside from these, time, light, and dark elements also exist, though I cannot say much more about them until you test them for yourself. And that is why I shall observe you as you try your hand at the different magics. Begin.”

After that, with Lefi’s supervision, I tested my magic on the other elements besides earth and fire. These were my findings:

Water: I conjured hot water that was the perfect temperature for bathing.

Wind: I conjured a warm wind that was perfect for drying off.

Others: Nothing in particular. I either didn’t have a knack for them or wasn’t attuned to them yet. I figured I’d find out eventually regardless.

Using water magic felt fairly natural, but there wasn’t much I could do with the wind magic aside from making it stronger or weaker. Even a little bit of tweaking was enough to make the wind go full force, though, sort of like an actual hair dryer. I’d just call it dryer magic at this point.

“Tell me, why do you use your magic in such peculiar ways?”

“I-I can’t help it, okay? That’s just the stuff I can think of.”

Through trial and error, I’d definitely figured out just how much magic relied on the power of imagination. It needed more than just a simple image in my mind; if I didn’t really solidify the mental picture, then nothing would manifest in reality. As a result, I knew that the best way to make it work was to imagine things I was already familiar with. Unfortunately for me, the things that were most familiar to me were regular parts of my daily life. I’d automatically visualize those, which was why I kept materializing “peculiar” things like water hot enough for a bath or wind warm enough to dry off after said bath.

Yeah, sure, I definitely wanted to use magic like the coolest characters in the games I used to play. The problem, as sad as it was, was that my lack of imagination meant a lackluster use of my magic. Case in point, I couldn’t do anything better than the dryer magic.

Like I mentioned earlier, though, water magic seemed easier for some reason—I mean, I *did* manage to make it jump around. Thinking I might actually have a

talent for it, I figured that the best thing to do going forward would be to practice using it regularly and improve my skill. Then, once I was good enough with it, I wanted to create a water dragon. I had a feeling it wouldn't be a run-of-the-mill water dragon, though. No, I'd make it into a *hot* water dragon! For bathing! Oh yeah, that would feel incredible.

"And whatever are you doing now?"

"Hey! No peeking, Lefi. I'm about to wash my head."

I'd taken out the wooden bucket from the bath set I'd bought a while ago on the DP Catalog. I filled it, wet my head with warm water I manifested from my finger, and started shampooing. I was enjoying this impromptu shower, especially because I could control the flow of water myself.

The water and suds I washed off streamed directly toward Shii, who happily absorbed all of it. I felt like it was saying, "Yay! Snacks!" I was glad I didn't have to clean up too. Saved me a ton of time and effort. But I had to wonder if Shii would be all right. I mean, was it safe for it to drink shampoo?

At the end of the day, it probably didn't matter. Shii even ate the bags Lefi's cookies were in, and honestly, I think it enjoyed eating them. Now that I thought of it, maybe slimes were omnivores in the broadest sense of the word if they could eat inorganic material as well. Either way, I hadn't tried to stop Shii since it looked so content eating. Plus, it seemed like everything was being digested properly. Eh, but still...

Despite my worry over Shii, I finished washing my head, then lightly rubbed a towel over my hair before blowing hot air from my finger to dry it off. Ahhh, that felt so good. The truth was, I'd been feeling kinda grungy because I hadn't washed my hair yesterday.

"Might I request that you service me in the same way?"

Of *course* she'd been watching.

"You want me to wash your hair? Sure. You're the one who taught me this magic, so consider it me returning the favor. Here, lean forward."

"This...is *not* what I intended when I taught you how to use magic."

Despite sounding a bit exasperated, Lefi came closer and timidly offered me her head, so I started lathering her hair with shampoo.



Some time had passed since I became a demon lord. Today's tale involved a certain incident.

"Well? Anything to say for yourself?"

I sat on the throne, chin resting in my hands. Shii relaxed on my lap.

"I-I do not! Th-This was unavoidable! I am not at fault!"

In front of me was the supreme dragon girl Lefisios, vigorously declaring her innocence and denying all wrongdoing. I'd made her kneel on the ground seiza-style once I found out what had happened.

"You're not? Prove it, then. Go on."

Crickets. The legendary—hilarious, I know—Conqueror of Dragonkind didn't say a word. She'd been doing her damndest to look everywhere but at me.

"Haaaah..."

When I unconsciously let out that huge sigh, Lefi's shoulders twitched in fear. Seeing her like this, I couldn't feel even a trace of that overwhelmingly powerful aura from the first time we'd met.

"C'mon, say something. I'm willing to take it easy on you if you've got a halfway decent explanation."

I was pretty sure she didn't have a good reason, but I'd give her a chance.

"Well... I could not resist."

"Yeah?"

"It... It tasted so scrumptious! Before I knew what I was doing, I had devoured it all..."

Well, whaddya know? I hit the nail right on the head. No surprise there.

"You've been alive for over a millennium! How is it possible that you haven't learned even a *shred* of self-restraint?! It was a day! You only had to control

yourself for one day!”

“B-But...it was so heavenly!”

“That doesn’t make it okay, you stupid dragon!”

“What?! H-How dare you call me stupid?!”

“For someone who’s lived so long, you somehow have less impulse control than a kid. And you’re not sorry about it at all either! How someone like you managed to get classed as the Conqueror of Dragonkind is beyond me!”

“I will suffer your insults no longer!” she screeched. “Indeed, I am the Conqueror of Dragonkind! And none can stop me should I unleash calamity born of my desires! It is my right to live as I please!”

She had balls, trying to turn the tables on me. Too bad for her that it just pissed me off even more.

“Hmph! You are in no position to tell me to control myself, for I am Lefisios, harbinger of doom! The humans acknowledge me as such, and it is high time that you, too, understood that my will is heaven’s will!”

“I’m never giving you sweets again.”

“I humbly request that you forgive me.”

Miss Supreme Dragon wasted no time lowering her head and begging me to let her off the hook.



This whole mess started in the morning.

“Okay. Lefi, hold down the fort while I’m gone. You too, Shii. Be a good slime and wait here with Lefi.”

“...Understood.”

“If you get hungry, you can eat some of the stuff I left for you. Just don’t overdo it.”

“Hmm...”

Lying on the floor of the throne room, Lefi responded to me absentmindedly

while she played with an old-school Tamigotchi. Near her was Shii the slime, who bounced happily like it was saying, “I understand!”

I’d bought the portable little game Lefi was playing for myself from that crazy unlimited DP Catalog. It was the cheapest buy, probably because it was the smallest. It was also in its own category separate from all the other games in there. Not sure why. Anyway, since it was an oddity here, the one who’d ended up getting hooked on it was Lefi. From what she’d told me, this world hadn’t developed much yet, so it was her first time seeing technology like this. I didn’t think that was a bad thing, though. If this world *had* progressed far enough for games like that to exist, I honestly would’ve lost interest in living here.

“I did not know that demon lords were capable of creating such goods.” She’d sounded so surprised when I showed it to her. What she didn’t know was that I was pretty much guaranteed to be the only one in this world who could get them.

Incidentally, Lefi and Shii got along extremely well. Girls were girls regardless of species, apparently, because Lefi had the stereotypical girly sentiment of “small things are adorable.” She’d been doting on Shii since I summoned it, saying things like, “Oh ho ho ho! I shall make you the most powerful slime in existence, Shii!”

I could totally relate, though, since Shii *was* super cute. Who *wouldn’t* want to spoil it? Funnily enough, Shii had actually been afraid of Lefi at first, but after seeing that she and I got along well enough, I think it decided it didn’t have to be scared of her. Wasn’t long after that that it started playing with her too.

Lefi hadn’t stopped grinning like a goof because of Shii’s adorable playfulness. She looked like a besotted fool. Seeing her like this, I wondered how I’d ever been afraid of her. Rolling around on the floor, glued so seriously to the Tamigotchi screen, she didn’t seem anything like a thousand-year-old dragon. Her childlike appearance matched her personality to a T. I shook my head at the sight, smiling wryly.

“All right, I’ll be back,” I called out as I left the throne room. I walked quickly through the cave and before I knew it, I found myself back in big, beautiful nature. The reason I came out here was to earn DP, plain and simple. Most of

the ways to make DP depended on dungeon intruders, but I never got any of those. The only one so far had been that stupid mutt I'd kicked the crap out of.

Like I'd mentioned a while ago, there wasn't a lot of wildlife in the area because Lefi had marked her territory. For that same reason, stronger monsters that were sensitive to her power also seemed to stay away. On top of that, this region in particular was considered off the beaten path from normal civilization. In other words, I still hadn't come across a single human or even demi-human since I started living here.

I still had to make DP, though, and I'd come up with a great way to do it. Seeing as I was living in such an isolated area, why not just expand the dungeon's territory into the outside world? I figured getting everything I could see on the map under the dungeon's control would give me a bunch of passive DP because of the creatures that lived there. And thanks to lazy Lefi living in my dungeon, I had more than enough to buy expansions.

Normally, DP was better off being spent on stuff that would strengthen the dungeon like level upgrades, monster summons for attacking enemies, and traps. I didn't need to do that, though, because my dungeon had a security system so powerful it made the best security firm look like it was full of amateurs. Yup, it was that good-for-nothing dragon girl.

If anything, I actually felt bad for whoever *did* invade my dungeon. I sure wouldn't want to go up against her, which was why I wasn't particularly worried about the dungeon's safety. Since defense wasn't a problem, I saw no reason not to focus on making the dungeon more, well, dungeon-like. Especially considering that frankly, I wasn't a fan of having the throne room linked directly to the cave forever.

That said, I was free to go out and make DP whenever I felt like it, and I was totally gonna use it to enhance my dungeon. One of the buyable functions could show what it looked like outside even when I was inside the dungeon, like the morning sky or a night view. I could even increase the dungeon's dimensions with DP—the more I spent, the bigger I could make it.

Once I had the DP for it, I wanted to build a giant castle or something inside the dungeon. A sinister-looking one, like the ones villains and supernatural

beings owned in video games. Building that fortress from the city of Amor Londo in that brutally hard Dark Spirits game would be flat-out dope. Actually, nah. I didn't need *that* much space.

Anyway, back to leaving the cave. Sunrise was still a while away, so the world was covered in the darkness of night. The moon shone brightly through that darkness, lighting up a massive black castle that loomed way off in the center of the region. Light was coming from its windows, casting a glow through the shadows surrounding it. It was creepy as all hell, but it still gave off a super majestic vibe. It was giving me goosebumps. The good kind, but still, damn. I couldn't help but wonder who or what lived there. It was definitely the kind of thing that appealed to the male fantasy.

Up until now, I'd just wandered around aimlessly whenever I went exploring, but this time, I decided to use that castle as my goalpost. I also wanted to avoid fighting today, so it was nice to have a target and at least some sort of plan. Using my Stealth and Scout abilities and the map, I started sneaking quietly through the woods.

Speaking of abilities, I discovered there were two ways to get them. The first way, learning an ability by doing it, was how I'd learned Unarmed Combat. I beat that Cerberus to death and then it was just something I had. Somebody else might have done the same in a less extreme way, maybe by punching and kicking in a more normal fight.

The other way involved special items called Ability Scrolls. These scrolls contained all kinds of texts and shapes. If someone memorized those graphics while channeling their magic into the scroll, then they would learn whatever ability was in the scroll. It was laughably easy. Scrolls could only be used once, but the fact that once was all it took to learn an ability was absolutely nuts.

And where, you might ask, did I discover Ability Scrolls? The seemingly limitless DP Catalog, of course. It had a whole list of them, so I'd bought scrolls for the two abilities I mentioned earlier, knowing I'd need them if I was going to survive here. I'd shelled out the DP, then followed the instructions to obtain the abilities.

After that, my problem was figuring out how to actually use the Scout ability. I

wasn't too concerned about Stealth, but Scout had me stumped. Oh, almost forgot. This was how my stats looked now:

Name: Yuki

Race: Archdemon

Class: Demon Lord

Level: 16

HP: 2,350 / 2,350

MP: 6,960 / 6,960

Strength: 681

Stamina: 710

Agility: 586

Magic: 960

Dexterity: 1,290

Luck: 70

Ability Points: 0

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 5, Unarmed Combat 3, Elemental Magic 2, Stealth 3, Scout 3

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World

Dungeon Points (DP): 10,220

Damn straight I'd leveled up a bit. But it wasn't from defeating monsters; it was the result of basic strength training. Oh, also, I'd blown all my Ability Points on Analysis. Just using abilities would level them up too, so that was another reason Analysis had rocketed up. Now I could see even more data about others when I used it. And even though I hadn't had Stealth and Scout for very long, I'd managed to raise them to their current levels just by practicing using them in

my free time.

By the way, Stealth didn't work on Lefi. It sure did the trick on Shii, though. The first time I'd used it successfully and turned invisible, Shii bounced around in a panic, looking everywhere for me. It was so adorable, freaking out over me! Then, when I stopped using the ability and reappeared, Shii jumped around in delight. I felt kinda bad for hiding like that, even though technically I hadn't done it on purpose. I'd just been testing Stealth out and voila, I'd disappeared.

According to Lefi, most monsters on my level couldn't use their abilities for long periods of time because they cost MP, but I was different because I was a demon. More specifically, me being a demon *lord* meant I had plenty of MP, so I could keep my abilities active for up to two hours if I had to. It was interesting learning from Lefi that demons as a whole weren't automatically blessed with ridiculous amounts of MP. I owed my high base magical power to this demon lord body.

"Uh-oh. That thing might be too much for me to handle..."

"That thing" was a huge monstrosity a bit farther off. It looked like a bizarre tiger-rhino hybrid. I could see it eating away on some creature it had probably just hunted down. I had a feeling my cover would be blown if I got any closer to it. From the few stats I could see, it was definitely stronger than me. My best bet was to retreat before I ended up in a fight I'd lose. Decision made, I escaped as quickly but quietly as possible.

After a while, I managed to walk far enough that I left Lefi's domain. How did I know? Well, I started seeing powerful monsters sporadically, just like the one from earlier. There were other creatures too, which in itself was different from the general lack of life in the area under Lefi's control. If I turned this whole region into the dungeon's territory, my DP earnings were sure to go up by leaps and bounds.

"Dungeon expansion successful. Awww yeah! Wait, balls. Now I'm out of DP."

Hmm, what should I do now? Filling out the map some more would be super helpful. Yeah, that sounds good; I think I'll do that.

And that was how I spent the whole day outside. I went back to the dungeon after the sun had completely set and immediately headed for the kitchen. I'd

built one a few days ago using all the DP I got thanks to Lefi just kinda existing. But when I got there and opened the fridge, it was *completely. Friggin. Empty.*

Impossible. There'd been a week's worth of food inside. I knew that damn well; I'd checked before I left. I'd bought all kinds of supplies in bulk because doing it that way was cheaper than buying stuff like meat in normal portions, but there wasn't so much as a scrap of any of it left. Just what the hell could have done this? I could only think of one thing.

"Lefiiii!!!"

Now that the backstory's all cleared up, let's get back to the present. I was still beyond pissed; I couldn't believe how much of a glutton she was. That didn't make sense either, though. There'd been way too much food. It should have been impossible for her to down it all in a day, no matter how enormous her appetite was. Maybe she managed the feat because her original body was so humongous?

Hmm. Looking back, I *had* always found it strange that she ate so much during mealtimes. Then, wait, she never felt full, even with how much she usually devoured? So was it possible she'd actually been holding herself back all this time?

No. No, I couldn't let her trick me into empathizing with her. What happened today was because she was greedy, nothing else. I couldn't afford to feel sorry for her. Yeah, sure, I was absolutely raking in the DP thanks to her, but that was just a matter of give and take. It was her way of covering the cost of rent and groceries.

"Gah, I guess no dinner for me tonight."

I was flat broke right now since I'd spent all my DP on expanding the dungeon's territory. If I'd known *this* was going to happen, though, I would've stored the food in my Inventory instead of the kitchen.

I was reasonably confident that I'd have more DP again by tomorrow morning, but that didn't mean I wasn't annoyed about going hungry tonight. It was already so late that there was no point in going out to forage for edible plants either.

I let out a tired sigh. Hearing that sound, Lefi started babbling in a panic. Looked like she finally felt guilty.

“J-Just a moment! This issue will be resolved with more—what are they called? Dungeon Points, yes?!”

“Well...yeah.”

“Th-Then I know what I must do! I shall return in half an hour! Remain here!”

“Lefi, wait!”

She left the throne room so fast that I didn’t even have time to try to stop her.

Thirty minutes later on the dot, she came back with a surprise. And holy hello kitty, what a surprise and a half. Towering by the cave entrance was a ridiculously tall pile of monster and wildlife corpses. There were so many carcasses that the fluids oozing from the pile stained everything nearby red. But that wasn’t even the worst part. That honor went to the stench it was giving off, which was so strong that I felt like it was going to choke me to death.

“This is *literally* overkill, you idiot!”

“Eek!”

That absurd sound slipped out of the dragon girl when I smacked her on the head.

“Grrr... In all my centuries of existence, you are the first to have struck me.”

“Oh yeah? Well, it was my honor, Your Majesty.”

Lefi looked up at me with reproach, but I glared right back at her with scorn.

“Wh-Why must I bear the indignity of physical punishment?! Is it not ideal to possess as many of those Point things as possible?! I will have you know that I exerted a great deal of effort in herding these creatures, killing them, *and* transporting them here!”

“Herding”? Mate, wot? They weren’t livestock.

“I get it, but don’t you know there are limits? Just look. Look at this *actual* lake of blood. The dirt here used to be brown. I mean, come on! And what

exactly are we supposed to do with this mountain of carcasses? Where do I even start with cleanup? Wait a sec. Damn, I almost forgot—corpses can be turned into DP.”

That was exactly how I’d dealt with the Cerberus after destroying it.

“Then why did you strike me?!”

“Heat of the moment. Felt like the right thing to do.”

“Outrageous! I find your behavior unacceptable!”

Her Majesty The Conqueror of Dragonkind looked astonished that I could be such a smart-ass.

“I’m sorry, okay? I’m sorry. Here, let me rub your head and make the pain go away. You poor baby. There, there.”

“Ohhh, yeeesss... No! How dare you treat me like a child?!”

Lefi slapped my hand away angrily. Yeah, I figured that’d happen. So worth it, though.

As we talked, I activated the dungeon function that turned corpses into DP. Before our very eyes, the mound of death started disappearing almost like it was dissolving. By the time the last body was gone, not even a drop of blood remained. I could see the bare rock of the walls and the brown dirt of the ground again.

“What a curious spectacle indeed...”

“Yeah, I agree. Anyway, since I can actually eat dinner now, I’ll forgive you for what you did. We’ll call it even. Let me make one thing clear, though: I know that your real body is huge and so you need to eat more than you have been. Thing is, I don’t have the money to buy you that much food, so I need you to understand that I have limits for a reason.”

“Hmph. Understood. In essence, I must earn those Points if I wish to eat, yes?”

“Yeah. Just don’t overdo it. Seriously, *don’t*.”

If she did, I was positive she’d end up wiping out all life in the vicinity. Then

my efforts to expand the dungeon's territory would go to waste. Gonna have to pass on that one, thank you very much.

"Hmm. Henceforth, I shall endeavor to control myself."

"Please do. And now that that's settled, let's go home. I'll get something sweet for you when I buy my dinner."

"Cookies! I would like cookies!"

Chatting away, Lefi and I walked back to the dungeon.



A girl ran with a single-minded focus, panting hard. The terror and grief within her heart fueled her flight. She desperately forced her legs to keep going even though they didn't want to move anymore. She cut through the underbrush, never stopping. She didn't have a destination; she just needed to escape. She had to get away from the hounds of despair that were chasing her.

"Hey, this ain't good! The brat's heading straight into the Demonic Forest!"

"The hell're we s'posed to do about it?! We're in for an ass kicking if we lose the product!"

"An ass kicking's better than dying! Which is exactly what's gonna happen if we go in there! I dunno why, but lately there's been a lotta stories about the legendary ancient dragon being active again!"

"Tch... Infernal worthless bitch!"

She heard none of the conversation. She remained fixated only on what lay ahead as she fled deep into the forest.



"Rah!"

Squish!

"Hrgh!"

Splat!

"Take this!"

Whap!

“Blegh, gross! Some got in my mouth!”

I spat the stuff out, then shook the cheap sword I’d bought with DP to get the bits of flesh stuck to the blade off. What was before me was the headless corpse of...something. I wasn’t quite sure what it had been, mostly because I’d flung its head away after cutting it off.

My body’s specs were even more amazing than I thought they’d be. So far, I’d learned that I could take out most of the monsters around here with a single blow. Whatever part of them I hit would literally explode into chunks of meat.

I wished they’d stop doing that, though. All I wanted to do was slice clean through monsters with my sword, but for some reason, they all blew up instead. Plus, when they did that, blood would splatter all over the place. It was honestly way too gory, even for me. I could feel my sanity being chipped away every time I had to witness the sight. I desperately needed it to stop happening before I lost my flipping mind.

As much as I hated to admit it, I was pretty sure the problem was my garbage-tier sword techniques. When I’d bought this cheap sword from the DP Catalog, I’d used it by copying what I’d learned in kendo lessons during high school. It didn’t take long for me to learn the Swordsmanship ability that way. Kinda sucked that the ability felt like it was a dud, but that might have been because it was still at level 1.

I could sort of tell that my movements were smoother, but everything else seemed the same. What else could I have expected, though? I was an amateur, for God’s sake. Just learning an ability didn’t mean I’d be good at using it right away. When I’d tried practicing my swings, Lefi, who’d been watching at the time, asked me, “Might this be a new game you have created?” She’d sounded so legitimately confused that it made me want to cry.

Still, I did have one bit of good news. It was about one of my special abilities, the one called Demon Eyes. Up until now, I hadn’t found a single opportunity to put it to use, but after venturing outside again today, I finally had the chance to see what it could do.

With Demon Eyes, I could see the flow of an opponent’s magic in crazy detail.

Just like a lot of my other abilities, it was super useful to have. I'd used it on someone I saw earlier who was about to attack an enemy with their magic. Before they could even cast anything, I was able to see where their magic would flow, gather, and activate.

Thanks to the power of Demon Eyes, I was sure I could run circles around all kinds of enemies. Like, let's say I ran into an enemy who wanted to kill me on sight. If they used their power to make a spear out of the soil beneath our feet, I'd be able to see their plan from start to finish. These handy Demon Eyes on top of my other magical skills definitely made me strong as hell.

Might be worth it to switch paths from warrior demon lord to sorcerer demon lord. It'd be cool to be a badass sorcerer who hammered his enemies down with long-range magic attacks. The kind of slick mage who could easily evade the enemy with his unique Demon Eyes even if they tried to counter with their own ranged magic. Also, it kinda freaked me out whenever I felt my sword slash through hostile creatures. Feeling the resistance from their flesh and then seeing the flesh itself clinging to the blade gave me the heebie-jeebies. That didn't even take into account how dirty my clothes always got when the enemy inevitably exploded, never mind the disgusting aftermath every single time.

The more I thought about my new path, the better it looked. I couldn't say no. I'd still train in sword fighting, but I'd work on my magic at the same time. Speaking of my magic, I had another update: I couldn't use fire magic anymore. If I had to guess, I'd say it was because my subconscious decided it was too dangerous and I couldn't overcome that mental block. No matter how many times I tried, the best I could do was a flimsy little match-sized flame. A serious downgrade from the Hippo version.

Well, whatever. My compatibility with water and earth magics seemed a lot stronger anyway, so I'd been working on those. I was a little better at regulating water temperature now, and that was enough for me to say I was making progress. Of course, neither was strong enough to defeat an enemy, but I was set on using those elemental magics as the foundation of my own.

"And done. Now this part of the map is updated too."

Yup, it was yet another day of work growing the dungeon's territory. Fighting

just felt incidental at this point. I'd been doing my best to avoid monsters whenever I went out, but I'd started to think that I needed to stop being such a wimp and try to pick a fight. Otherwise, my own body's specs would be a mystery forever.

Eh, I'd leave that as a problem for future me. Current me wanted to keep focusing on expanding my dungeon's stomping grounds. Not to toot my own horn, but expansion efforts were going super well. Over the past few days, I'd been slowly working my way down the mountain from the cave's location halfway up it.

There was enough extra land in the dungeon's territory now that the DP rolled in three times faster than it had when I was relying on Lefi alone. Although, I did have a confession to make—I usually ended most days with almost no DP because I spent what I earned every time I went out on my aggressive expansion missions. Still, I couldn't wait to see how far I could go with the build-out, so the ends justified the means. No regrets.

“What the...?”

While I was busy grinding dungeon territory growth like a one-man assembly line, I saw something strange out of the corner of my eye. At first, I had no idea what it was. It was lying stock-still on the ground, crushing the plants beneath it. Specks of something red—blood, maybe—clung to it here and there. Initially, I thought it was a corpse, but...

Since it was in an area that was part of my dungeon's territory, I decided to check if opening the map would get me an alert from the enemy identification system. And what do you know, there *was* a response. That meant that whatever it was was still alive, because the system only picked up on living things.

Still not knowing what exactly it was, I slowly, carefully moved closer. When I got close enough, I finally saw its true form. It was a little girl, lying facedown on the ground and covered in blood.

“Son of a—”

The second I realized it was a little girl, I rushed over in a panic and bent down to check on her.

Is she conscious? Nope. Given the deep cuts on her back, I was almost positive she'd been attacked by a monster. The gashes, still gushing blood, looked like they'd been made by claws or something. She was technically still alive because I could hear her breathing, but real talk, she was hanging on by a thread. If I'd found her even a few minutes later, she would have already been on her way to the next life.

I immediately pulled out a small bottle from my Inventory. *How does this thing work again? Right, just sprinkling it should do the trick.* I raised the bottle and started pouring the liquid over her wounds, being careful not to spill a single drop.

"Ngh..." the little girl moaned quietly, clearly in pain.

Is it working? I saw the answer to my question right away. The minute the stuff in the bottle touched her skin, the tears started closing and healing. It was actually gross as all get-out to watch and made me want to hurl, but her flesh kept regenerating quickly, and by the time the bottle was half-empty, her skin was back to being soft and supple like a kid's was supposed to be. It was so smooth now that it looked like she'd never been attacked in the first place.

"Haaaah..."

I let out the breath I'd been holding all at once. I felt so relieved now that I could see the girl's chest rising and falling normally. Definitely more reassuring than her shallow, practically lifeless gasps from a few moments earlier.

Crisis successfully averted. My hands were shaking, but I still used them to wipe the cold sweat off my body. Then I shook off the tension that had built too.

The item I'd used was called a "Super Potion," by the way. It seemed like it was an insanely effective medicine used in this world. For example, if someone got their arm blown off just like a certain green character named after a woodwind instrument, a bottle of Super Potion would have that arm growing right back. Or if you got a hole punched through your stomach, sprinkling some Super Potion on it would have you whole again in a flash.

It was incredibly mind-blowing how well it worked. Had to see it to believe it. I could totally imagine it being used as a wartime strategy to make zombies or

something.

“It would be wise for you to keep a vial of it on your person if you insist on conducting your affairs outdoors. Your strongest abilities are nothing against the countless foes you are no match for, even in these woods.”

Convinced by Lefi’s argument, I’d bought a bottle of the Super Potion and shoved it into Inventory before I left for the day. Only one, though, because it was kinda expensive. But I never could have imagined I’d end up using it like *this*. Guess even that freeloading slacker with a sweet tooth knew how to make herself useful occasionally. I’d give her some chocolate as a reward when I got back to the dungeon.

Goddamn, that’s awful.

The thought sprung to my mind as I inspected the little girl again. Her body was wrapped in a raggedy-looking sack that was basically just a piece of cloth with holes for a head and arms. Her beautiful, golden hair was a dirty mess too. I hadn’t noticed earlier because I was a little preoccupied with the gruesome slashes on her back, but now, I could see even more wounds on other parts of her body. They definitely weren’t fresh ones either. It was pretty easy to guess what kinds of horrible things she’d been through.

“There’s no way I can leave her like this.”

Chapter 2: Daily Life in a Dungeon

“Yuki... So, you possess *that* sort of inclination?”

“I know exactly what you’re thinking and you couldn’t be more wrong, but I don’t have the time to argue with you right now.”

I was back in the throne room, carrying the still-unconscious little girl in my arms. I headed to my futon, which I hadn’t bothered putting away before I left, and set her down on top of it.

Speaking of the throne room, I’d bought a bunch of stuff and basically transformed it into a normal living space. Besides my futon, there was a long table with some chairs off to the side, along with other random things. It no longer gave off that cold, empty aura it had when I’d first woken up here. Of course, it was only natural that it had gotten some upgrades, what with me and Lefi living here. If anything, the throne itself seemed out of place now.

“Oh? That lass is a bloodsucker?”

“Yeah, looks like it.”

Analysis showed me the girl’s stats.

Name: Iluna

Race: Vampire

Class: None

Level: 3

HP: 17/25

MP: 120/120

Strength: 40

Stamina: 50

Agility: 46

Magic: 72

Dexterity: 68

Luck: 412

Special Abilities: Bloodsucking

Abilities: Cooking 2, Sewing 1

Her name was Iluna. Her stats were low, but she *was* a kid. *Only domestic abilities, eh?* She'd probably picked those up from helping her parents at home since she looked old enough to do that. I put her at about seven or eight years old. *She seems like a great kid.*

"You are very good at bringing back unusual things, Yuki."

"'Unusual'?"

Did Lefi mean the girl's race? I'd assumed that vampires were just as normal here as anything else, but it sounded like I was wrong.

"Indeed. You see, vampires and succubi are part of the bloodsucker species. Both races tend to produce excessively beautiful individuals, so in recent decades, humans have hunted them down aggressively to keep them as slaves. As a result, they are nearly extinct. The Children of the Wood also possess fair countenances, but they have signed nonaggression treaties with humans and thus do not suffer the same fate. In reality, however, mankind perceives most nonhuman species as hostile, which means they rarely show mercy or reservation toward the demonic races. The possibility is high that this child managed to escape the slavers hunting her."

According to my mental wiki, the Children of the Wood were elves. Outside of that, I understood everything Lefi said, even if I couldn't think of a response. After all, slaves had existed on Earth all throughout human history. Hell, slavery was still an issue by the time I'd died, especially with all the different terms for it in the modern era. A prime example was the scumbags in the Middle East who constantly shat all over human rights, waging war on the daily in the name of religion.

Honestly, I didn't find it all that strange that the same thing happened here, where it seemed like there was always a war of some kind going on. But—and this was a huge “but” —just because I acknowledged the reality, it didn't mean I accepted it.

Humans again, huh? I know I used to be human, and I still know what it was like to be one, but the fact that they're pulling this kind of bullshit here too means I probably won't be going out of my way to get on their good side.

With those thoughts running through my head, I drizzled the rest of the Super Potion onto the girl's other wounds. As the liquid did its thing, I heard a tiny, sweet voice.

“Nnh...”

“Hey, you're awake! Do you hurt anywhere else?”

The vampire girl, Iluna, stared up at me in a daze for a few seconds. Then I saw the fog lift from her eyes as she finally noticed that I was there. She shrieked in terror and moved away from me as quickly as she could.

“I-It's okay! It's okay! I'm not gonna hurt you, so don't be scared.”

It didn't seem like my words had gotten through to her, because the little girl still shook with fear as she tried desperately to put more distance between us. I couldn't really blame her for being on guard, though. I would've freaked out too if I opened my eyes and the first thing I saw was a stranger. She was just a kid, so her being this afraid made a lot of sense.

What the heck should I do...? As I thought about how to handle the terrified girl, Shii suddenly flew toward me, landing on my shoulder with a *plop*. My beloved pet had been snoozing away on the cushion I'd bought as its makeshift bed until just now, but it must have woken up when it sensed Iluna's presence. Now, Shii was staring Iluna down, wiggling as if saying, “Who's this?! Tell me!” All right, all right, it'd be more accurate to say that it *felt* like Shii was staring since it technically didn't have eyes, but that had nothing to do with anything.

“Ahhh...”

That astonished sound came from Iluna, who was apparently very interested in Shii. Her eyes darted back and forth between it and me.

“You wanna try touching it?” I asked while pointing at the slime still lounging on my shoulder. She very, *very* carefully came closer until she could finally nudge Shii’s body with her finger. Shii jiggled excitedly, making it look like jelly wiggling. It decided that Iluna wanted to play, so it leaped onto her and gave a happy little squish.

“Huh?! Heh... Ha ha ha! That tickles!”

Another tribute sacrificed on the altar of Shii’s cuteness. Seriously, though, the scared look on her face melted away as she laughed and rubbed Shii’s wobbly body. Seeing the little girl smile at long last, I let out a sigh of relief. *You’re a freaking lifesaver, Shii.*

“I’m Yuki. That’s Shii. Oh, and the thing behind me is Lefisios. What’s your name?”

“How impertinent!”

We already knew her name, of course, but I was afraid she’d get scared again if I said it out of the blue. My best bet was to play dumb. Besides, this was the easiest conversation-starter there was.

“Iluna!”

She introduced herself with a big grin on her face. Now that she’d dropped her guard—go Shii—she was super adorable.

“So, your name’s Iluna, huh? Then, Iluna, can you tell me why you were in that place?”

“Umm, b-because scary humans were chasing me.”

“Ah, I see.” Just like Lefi suspected. “Then, do you know where your hometown— Sorry, big word. Do you know where your house is?”

She shook her head from side to side when I asked that.

“Our... Our house is gone. Father and mother, and all the grandpas and grandmas in our neighborhood too. Everyone died... Hic...”

“H-Hey, calm down. That’s it, just like that. Don’t cry. It’ll be okay, I promise.”

The instant I heard the first teary hiccup, I started soothing the little girl. Not

sure why I said everything would be okay, but it sounded right.

“Heh heh heh. You, who have no fear of the mighty dragon that I am, falter in the face of a girl’s tears. How very pathetic.”

“Oh, shut it.”

I whirled around to scowl threateningly at Lefi, who cackled like a maniac. Half-assed mission completed, I turned back to the girl. Then, with a small sigh to steel myself, I placed my hand gently on her head.

“Don’t worry, Iluna. Those scary humans won’t come here. If you don’t have anywhere else to go, you can stay here for as long as you want.”

She definitely didn’t have to worry about those scary people anymore. Not when a creature far more formidable than them was relaxing right behind me. At the very least, this dungeon was leagues safer than the outside world. I knew that much.

“I can...?” Iluna asked. She still looked a little anxious.

“Of course! I’m more than happy to have a cute kid like you around, Iluna.”

I was the one who’d brought her here, after all, so it only made sense that I look after her. One more person to support wouldn’t really make a difference at this point.

“But... But the humans said, they said we can’t live. They said we should just die. And that’s why father and mother died.”

“Is that...what they told you?”

Iluna nodded in response. A bunch of dark, ugly emotions welled up inside me, but I remembered just in time that Iluna was watching me. I couldn’t release those nasty feelings in front of her, so I buried them deep in my heart. Once again in control, I put on a big smile.

“There’s no way any of that’s true, you little dummy. I’m sure they were only being mean to you because they were jealous of how adorable you are, Iluna.”

“Really...?”

“Yup. I, for one, would never want you dead, Iluna. So I forbid you from

thinking that about yourself too. Got it?”

“Um, um... Okay, Yukiki!”

Grinning from ear to ear, Iluna bobbed her head in agreement. Kids were definitely much better off as natural bundles of energy. *Iluna, Yukiki is happy as long as you are.* And now that she had some of her energy back, a funny little gurgle came from the vicinity of her stomach.

“Guess that’s my cue to feed you. Is there anything in particular you wanna eat, Iluna? I think I can get you whatever you’re craving.”

“Um, uh, I want...” Iluna fidgeted shyly, peeking up at me as she tried to answer. “I... I want... I want Yukiki’s blood!”

Holy baloney, what?! Is this kid a yandere?! The second after I had that thought, I remembered that she’s a vampire.

“Oh, yeah, right. You sure you’re good with my blood, though?”

“Uh-huh! I want yours!”

“O-Oh, okay then.”

Why am I kinda happy about such a bizarre request? The frick is wrong with me?

“Hmm, are you certain?”

Quietly watching the story unfold until now, Lefi abruptly inserted herself into the conversation.

“What? Do you have some kind of objection?”

Wait, would I turn into a vampire if Iluna sucked my blood? But I wasn’t human anymore anyway, so did it really matter if I turned into something else? Nah, I didn’t care.

“No, not an objection precisely. Nevertheless... Oh, bother. Do as you please.”

Something was definitely on Lefi’s mind. I wanted to know what, but I also couldn’t ignore Iluna, who’d been sneaking expectant glances up at me. Wasn’t like I could say no at this point either, so I surrendered myself to her.

Noticing that I was sitting at the ready, Iluna climbed excitedly into my lap,

and then...she chomped down on the base of my neck. It didn't so much hurt as tickle. I wondered if her fangs contained some sort of anesthetic. Having my blood sucked felt pretty much like getting blood drawn for a physical. Overall, I'd say not even a hint of discomfort in the experience.



But there was a problem. Something completely unexpected. Iluna clung to me like wet tissue as she sucked my blood. I could feel the heat radiating from her body, and she was panting so hard from the excitement of drinking my blood that I could feel her breath on my earlobes.

This was bad. Like, *really* bad. How do I say this... I wasn't sure if all vampires reacted the same way when they drank blood, but the way she was breathing was oddly seductive. She smelled really nice too, which only made it worse. All that, combined with the feeling of her small, thin arms wrapped tightly around me, evoked an irresistible love for her. Long story short, I felt like I was doing something incredibly naughty.

Did I mention that this was really bad? Because it was *really bad*. This was the definition of guilty pleasure, and damn was it a powerful feeling. I couldn't stress how dangerous the situation was becoming, like something taboo might awaken in me at any moment.

C-Calm down, dumbass. You need to calm down. You got this. Use that willpower you're so proud of. Your resolve is unshakable. It's okay, you're okay. I'm okay. I'm a normal guy, a totally normal guy who's into totally normal, mature women only. And that's why I'm not going to get caught up in anything forbidden. Nope. No way. Not a chance. I'll be fine. I'll be just fine—

Lefi had been watching us the whole time I'd been desperately fighting my internal battle. And then, of course, she spoke.

"Yuki... So you do *indeed* possess that sort of inclination—"

"Th-The hell I do!"

Even I didn't think that sounded convincing.

"Say, Lefi? You mind giving her a bath?" I asked after Iluna had had her fill. For some reason, I was completely whooped.

Maybe it was because she was still so young, but Iluna wasn't particularly good at sucking blood. My blood was trickling from her mouth, getting her clothes even dirtier. Ah, right, not clothes but the glorified potato sack she was still wearing. The fabric looked even worse up close. It was tattered from her

mad dash through the forest, with the back in especially bad condition. She had definitely sweat buckets out there too, so getting her cleaned up right away was a priority.

As an aside, I'd built the bathroom a little bit past the kitchen. It had a toilet and a bathtub, and was modeled after the ones you'd usually find in apartments on Earth. Spaces like kitchens and bathrooms were designated as independent dungeon facilities, so naturally, the DP Catalog had all kinds of options.

For example, if I wanted to, I could make a huge open-air bath like what hotels and resorts back on Earth had. I could even change the water from regular hot water to hot *spring* water. You bet your ass I planned on doing major renovations throughout the dungeon once I'd saved up a ton of DP again.

"Oh? You intend to procure my services without compensating me?" Lefi asked, aiming a smug smirk at me. Was she for real?! She had guts, trying to test me, I'd give her that.

"All right, I'll buy you two bags of cookies."

"You dare underestimate me? Three bags."

"And *you* underestimate *me*. Did you forget that *I'm* the only one here with the power to dish out your sweets? You might wanna dial down the greed."

It wasn't like three bags of cookies would break the bank since I had some DP to spare now, but I couldn't risk spoiling her. If I gave her an inch, she always tried to take a mile, and she needed to learn that that wouldn't fly.

"Grrr. It maddens me to no end that I cannot unleash my full strength on you... Very well. I accept your terms."

Lefi was pissed about it, but she complied. She didn't even bother trying to hide how annoyed she was.

"If—*if*—you do a good job with her bath, I'll give you cake too."

"A new confection?! Understood! Come, child! I shall show you how to use the area known as the 'bathroom'! The bathtub itself is exceptional!"

"Yay, yay! Thank you, Lefifi!"

“Pffft!”

I burst out laughing at Iluna’s nickname for Lefi.

“‘L-Lefifi’...?! Child, how dare you refer to me so insolently! You must exhibit the proper respect when addressing your elders!”

“Hmm... Then, Lady Lefifi!”

“...I suppose that will do.”

Yeah, that describes Lefi spot-on.

With that, Iluna followed Lefi into the bathroom.



Our dungeon’s newest resident, Iluna, was even prettier than I’d imagined. Glittering golden hair, huge hazel eyes, and a face that put popular idols to shame. Plus, she was the perfect height for head pats. Lefi had said that vampires and succubi were beautiful races, but she still seemed like a beauty among beauties.

Iluna told us that everyone she knew was killed, so I wondered why she was allowed to live. Maybe it was because those waste-of-space slavers thought the same thing I did. She looked completely different now than the first time I’d seen her, when she was just a tiny thing half the size of Lefi, covered in mud and beat to hell.

Cleaned up and dressed in actual clothes—a dress and accessories that matched Lefi’s—she was a total knockout. In a few more years, I was sure men would be breaking down the doors to get to her. Lefi herself was gorgeous in her human form, so it wouldn’t be surprising if some stranger saw the two of them together and mistook them for sisters. Then again, one had horns and a tail, and there was the whole “one’s hair is silver and the other’s is gold” thing, so maybe it was obvious that they weren’t related.

“Yukiki! What’s this?”

A night had passed since I’d found Iluna. She was so energetic now that it was hard to believe she’d been at death’s door so recently. After getting better, she started to seem super interested in the dungeon and started checking out

everything in it. Sometimes, she'd toss questions my way too, just like that one.

"Ah, okay, you see the little toy sword over there? Stab it into one of the holes in the barrel."

Following my instructions, Iluna picked one of the holes in the barrel and stuck the toy sword into it.

"Woow! Yukiki, something flew out!"

Iluna tried to grab the thing that flew out with all her might. When she caught it, she turned toward me with a big, proud smile. The toy she was playing with was that super-famous family game Bounce-Up Buccaneer. Life in a dungeon was easy and comfortable, but unfortunately, there was a *lot* of free time. That was why I'd bought a bunch of games simple enough that even Lefi could play them. Bounce-Up Buccaneer was one of those games, although she refused to play it anymore. The buccaneer had hit her square in the face when he flew out one time, and now she looked annoyed whenever she so much as saw the thing.

Charmed by the sight of Iluna playing, I sat down cross-legged on the throne, which had become so comfortable for me that I hated sitting anywhere else. Then, I started my daily routine of checking the interface. DP revenue stream looked good—*really* good. I still planned on increasing the dungeon's territory, but I didn't have to worry so much about DP anymore. As long as I didn't have a huge unexpected expense, I was fine. I deserved a pat on the back for getting myself financially stable as quickly I did.

Then...how about I try this out? Resolved, I slid my finger over the Loot Roll option in the menu. I hadn't messed with it at all because I'd been spending my DP on other things, but now I had some breathing room. The truth was, I'd been itching to give it the ol' college try this whole time. I couldn't stop thinking about it. *I mean, it's important to inspect everything, right?*

Having convinced myself, I tapped firmly on the Loot Roll button to open the page. It was pretty bare-bones, with four options listed: 100, 1,000, 10,000, and 100,000. Spending more DP most likely meant I'd get a rarer prize. It would've been nice to see the possibilities for each option, but unfortunately, the Catalog wasn't that generous.

Hmm, the two most expensive options are a little out of my price range, so... My mind made up, I touched the 1,000 DP option. As soon as I did, particles of light appeared in front of me, just like when I'd summoned Shii. Once they gathered into a single point—

“Huh? Is that...a gun?”

It looked like a derringer, but twice as big and with a cylinder. Actually, it was probably better to call it a modded revolver. The chased metal surface combined with the intricate designs on the barrel and grip made it look really fancy.

Magic Pistol: Instead of regular bullets, this pistol fires magical ones. The power of each bullet is dependent on the amount of magic in it. Holds 7 rounds.

“Whooooaaa!”

That just kind of slipped out when I saw the details with Analysis. *This thing is insanely cool.* If this had been a cash-shop item in an FPS game, I absolutely would have spent real money on it. That's how cool it was. A literal holy-grail weapon.

I wanted to shoot it really badly but figured it'd be best to test-fire it later. You know, since I was intent on doing more pulls. Speaking of, I'd decided that the gun was a good sign of things to come. It definitely wasn't a dud, so I took that to mean I had a decent shot at getting something even rarer. *All right, let's keep up the momentum. My time has come!*

In hindsight, I should have stopped then and there. Scrub brush, scrub brush, soap, wooden cup, soap, wooden cup, hempen twine, stuffed animal, Tupperware, pot lid, hand puppet, plastic bag, pot lid, pot lid, key chain, pencil, pot lid. That was the mountain of garbage the system had dropped when I went hard on the loot rolls. All stuff I could have easily bought for 100 DP or less. “The next one. The next one for sure,” I'd kept telling myself and pulling like every desperate gambler. But each pull was a bust, of course, and I'd ended up completely burned out, of course.

Hold on. I just remembered something about myself. I had absolute dogshit luck—the lowest out of literally everything I'd Analysis'd so far, including Shii the slime. You know, that first roll had to have been a fluke, or maybe even a trap to get me to lower my guard and keep rolling. What a godawful loot-box system. I'd wanted to play, but boy had I gotten played instead. *Shit, balls, hell, and damn.*

Also, *why* did I get so many pot lids as “prizes”? Nobody would actually ever need that many lids. If the system was going to drown me in stuff, it could have at least dropped food. Jeez. Seeing the pile of trash, I slumped back on the throne. Then Iluna came close and looked up at me.

“Yukiki, what are you looking at?”

“Oh, this? It's a menu— Wait, what?” My automatic response to Iluna's question got cut short by my brain rebooting. “Iluna, can you see what I'm using? You can see this?”

“That clear board thing? I can see it!”

What the heck? Not even Lefi could see my interface, so I figured that meant nobody could. Looks like I was wrong...

“Yukiki, I want to play that game too! The one where lots of stuff comes out!”

“Huh? Oh, uh, sure. Why not? But only one time.”

Iluna's chatter brought me back from obsessing over the interface. I didn't want her to pull more than once since I couldn't in good conscience let her bomb the loot rolls like I had. And also maybe a little bit because I didn't have much DP left after my own miserable run.

“Yaaaay! Thank you, Yukiki!” Iluna cheered as she walked over to me and jumped up onto my lap with a grunt. “What to push?”

“Here. Touch this.”

I pointed at the Loot Roll button on the screen. With an enthusiastic “Okay!” she reached her finger toward the menu and tapped on it. The second she did, waves of light rushed around, lighting up the entire throne room. It was nothing like when I'd rolled.

“Wh-Whooooa!”

“Woow! So pretty!”

What the fuck is happening?! It didn’t seem like the light was trying to create an object like the ones I’d pulled. From the way it was flitting around, I could sort of make out what looked like a silhouette with four limbs and a tail. Once the light particles started to shrink and disappear, they left behind an enormous figure.

Bright, snow-white fur covered the huge body. The curved claws on each of its four limbs looked sharp enough to cut through rock. I got an impression of intelligence from the eyes it was staring at me with. Everything about it made it feel weirdly dignified. “It” was a wolf. A wolf that stood about a head taller than me. I was speechless.

Name: None

Race: Fenrir

Class: Wolf King

Level: 1

HP: 1,810/1,810

MP: 5,452/5,452

Strength: 607

Stamina: 685

Agility: 784

Magic: 872

Dexterity: 890

Luck: 140

Special Abilities: Super Speed, Morphing Chains, Body Modification

Abilities: Claw Combat 2, Ice Magic 4, Lightning Magic 4,

Danger Detection 4

Title: Demon Lord's Subordinate

I was frozen in shock, mouth hanging open, dumbfounded at the completely unexpected drop. It definitely had “fenrir” as its race, right? I had to double-check. It did. Wasn't Fenrir the wolf god from Norse myths? But I could see this thing with my own two eyes, so it couldn't have been a myth. Wow. Just wow.

Just a second, though. Weren't this thing's stats insanely high? They were barely lower than mine. By the time it hit the same level as me, those values would be through the freaking roof. I mean, jeez, it even had me beat in Agility already, so that sucked. It had a lot of weird abilities too, and then there was the fact that it was literally only just born but its class was already “Wolf King.”

“Oooh, what a big wolfie!”

Iluna's happy shout snapped me out of my overwhelmed thoughts. She hopped down from my lap and rushed over to the wolf.

“Hey! Iluna, wait!”

Suddenly afraid for her life, I quickly chased after her. As it turned out, though, I had no reason to be scared. It seemed the fenrir understood that we were its masters. It didn't look the least bit bothered by Iluna clinging to its leg; it just stood there submissively, its head lowered.

“Sooo fluffy!”

“Damn it, Iluna. What would you have done if this thing was aggressive?”

“It's okay! Don't worry! This baby doesn't smell bad!”

It doesn't smell bad...? Did Iluna have the power to judge others based on their scents? But an ability like that wasn't listed in her stats.

At that moment, Shii, who'd been chilling quietly, doing nothing in particular, suddenly bounced toward the fenrir. It jiggled in front of the wolf pup, almost like it was puffing out its chest assertively the way little kids do. I had the feeling Shii was lecturing it, saying something along the lines of, “I've lived here longer than you, so I'll teach you all sorts of stuff!”

As for the fenrir, well, it remained calm. It didn't seem bothered by Shii's proud attitude, even though Shii's power rank was so much lower than its own. I had no idea what Shii was saying, of course, but it seemed like the fenrir was listening closely to its lesson. *Whoa, how mature. It's acting like a real grown-up.*

"You...have brought forth an unbelievable creature."

Lefi scared me when she said that. She'd been sleeping all day, but all that noise had definitely woken her up because she was standing next to me now.

"So that thing *is* incredibly strong?"

"That is an understatement. It is still a child now, but once it grows into its full adult form, its power will rival the legendary force of my own. I have only encountered a fenrir once, long ago, and the battle that ensued was quite troublesome. Since then, I have strongly wished to never meet one again."

The fact that Lefi of all people is saying that is just... Damn, dude. Also, if it was a pup in terms of size and not just age, I might be in trouble as it matured. Would it even fit in here by the time it was fully grown?

"That aside. I find the wolf's attitude curious. The way it behaves so respectfully toward the girl and Shii makes me wonder if there is more to those two than we believed."

I thought the same thing.

"Hey, Lefi. Just to be totally sure, you can't see this, right?"

I asked Lefi about my interface while watching Iluna and Shii interact with the baby fenrir. Iluna kept hounding it for a ride, and I felt like Shii was doing the same thing with its exuberant bounces. The wolf gave in to their demands and let them hop on. With one girl and one thing now on its back, it began prowling around the throne room.



“Hmm? You refer to your manifestation that displays an individual’s attributes, yes? Correct, I cannot see it.”

“Well, it doesn’t *just* show a person’s stats.”

I gave her a basic explanation of the interface and all the stuff it could do.

“I see. So your mysterious power to create things comes from the dungeon itself. Intriguing.”

“Yeah, and it looks like Iluna can see my menu too.”

“Hmm... I understand the answer you are seeking. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you for certain why that lass can see your menu. But I *can* explain to you the difference between myself and her.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It is simple. You formed a matrimonial bond with her.”

“...I did *what*?”

I stared at Lefi as I spoke. Even to my own ears, I sounded dumb.

“Blood is an integral component of the body. Consuming another’s blood and making it a part of one’s own makeup is equivalent to the act of mating. For bloodsuckers—vampires, in particular—drinking blood means a covenant of marriage. Certainly, there exist unprincipled, unethical bloodsuckers who drink blood with wanton disregard, but the majority of them only drink from those they truly care for. In essence, their mates.”

Are you cereal...? This can’t be true.

“B-But isn’t blood a vital food source for bloodsuckers? There’s no way they can all be married! So what about those unattached people?!”

“What they require is the blood itself, so it matters not where the blood originates. It can be from any wild animal, even. Most unmarried bloodsuckers sustain themselves that way, in fact. But I think it likely the girl’s knowledge of her own people’s customs does not extend that far. Nevertheless, bloodsucking is instinctive. Though she is young, there is no doubt that her desire for you and you alone is true. Well done, Yuki.”

I was flat-out decimated by Lefi's truth bomb.

"Wh-Wh-Why didn't you tell me all this before?!"

"But is this not the ideal situation for a child-lover such as yourself? As I recall, you were terribly excited by the sight of my naked body as well."

"L-Like hell I was!"

F-Foook, she still has the wrong idea about me! Then, a sudden thought popped into my head. With a gasp, I hurriedly opened the DP revenue section of the interface. I hadn't mentioned this before, but that page detailed exactly where my DP came from.

And...yup, just like I thought. Lefi was still making me insane amounts of money, but Iluna's number was now zero, just like Shii's, though Shii's was zero because it was a dungeon monster. Even the goblin children I saw outside on my explorations brought in at least 3 DP. This meant that the dungeon saw Iluna as a subordinate rather than an intruder.

"Gaaah! How could you do this to me?! You're usually so condescending and full of yourself! Why'd you have to pick *now* to be so stonking 'considerate'?!"

"Wh-What disrespect you show me! I kept my silence for your sake! You should be grateful for that!"

"For *my* sake?! I sure don't remember asking you to look out for me! That's it! No sweets for you for three days, starting today!"

"You dare attempt to oppress me in such a manner?! Well, I will defy you!"

I tuned out Lefi's incessant squawking and took a deep breath. Back to the matter of Iluna. She hadn't asked for blood since last night. From what I understood, she only needed blood once a week and was fine with normal food otherwise.

All right, I have to think ahead. It made me happy to know that Iluna loved me, but that kind of love never lasted long when it was coming from a kid. I was sure that when she hit puberty, she'd say stuff like, "I hate you, Yukiki!" Ah, damn it. Just imagining it made me kinda sad.

That was exactly why I needed to get ahead of this whole thing. I decided I'd

play dumb about vampire customs as long as I could or until she got older, whichever came later. “What? You want to know how bloodsuckers live? You’re asking the wrong guy.” Yup, that was my go-to if she ever asked. Just pretend not to know.

If she still loves me even after she grows up, then...

Only then would I actually start to think about that sort of thing.



I felt a lot calmer after I’d decided on a plan of action concerning Iluna. With the mental reset, I was ready to try out my new toy—er, inspect the new item in my possession, the glorious Magic Pistol. I held it in one hand as I headed out of the throne room and through the cavern outside. As always, that vast natural landscape below me made me excited, but today I was even more excited about what I was carrying.

I never imagined that the first time I’d get to shoot a gun would be in another world. Crazy. Then again, I wasn’t sure if this thing could even be considered a gun. It sure looked like one, though, and it *did* have “pistol” in its name. If it quacks like a duck...

Thanks to the magical training I’d been doing, I finally had decent control of the flow of magic within my body. I didn’t have to focus so hard on circulating it anymore, and so I started directing my energy into the Magic Pistol. Since I didn’t want to use too much magic on the first test, I pulled up the menu to keep an eye on my MP. Once my MP had gone down by exactly 10, I stopped the flow of magic. And then, just like they do in movies, I raised the pistol, took aim at a huge boulder a little ways ahead, and fired.

Recoil isn’t too bad, I thought as the bullet sliced through the air with a sharp whistle. A moment later, I heard a hard *crack*, so I sprinted over to the boulder to see what kind of damage it had done.

So this is what 10 MP will do, eh? Looking at the gunshot “wound,” only a tiny piece of the rock had been chipped off. *Hmm... The description did say that the power of the bullet would change based on how much magic I put into it. All right, then it’s time to up the ante.* I opened the menu again to watch my MP value as I charged up the next shot. These were the results of my experiments:

10 MP: The bullet chipped a small piece off the boulder.

100 MP: The bullet put a small crater in the boulder.

500 MP: The bullet went through the crater and out the other side of the boulder.

1,000 MP: A cannonball-sized bullet launched out of the pistol and blew huge chunks of rock off the boulder.

5,000 MP: A giant beam of energy shot out of the barrel, completely incinerated the boulder, and flattened about thirty meters' worth of the mountain behind it.

That last shot literally stunned me into silence. Was this pistol an even bigger winner than I'd first thought? The insane losses I'd suffered after it dropped definitely had me down in the dumps, but maybe this gun alone made up for all the junk in that pile.

Now, when it came to the force of the bullet, I definitely didn't need the level of damage 5,000 MP could do. Even 1,000 MP was kind of a lot. Admittedly, when I sunk in 5,000 MP, the barrel had started to shake super hard, which probably meant it couldn't handle much more than that. I had for sure thought about putting all my MP into one shot, but based on the results so far—especially that last one—it was a good thing I didn't.

As far as its other mechanisms went, I learned that it was necessary to stop the flow of my magic if I wanted to load more than one round. Magic on for the first bullet, then off to prepare the second, and repeat. Once I had my rounds loaded, I'd pick the one I wanted and put more magic into it to fire. I could also change the power of each shot. So, for example, the first shot could be 100 MP, then I could do 1,000 MP for the next one.

Being able to tune my shots would be a huge advantage. I could trick an opponent into underestimating me by starting off with a 10-MP round since it wasn't anything to write home about, then catch them off guard with a 1,000-MP bullet. I also had the option of going scorched-earth right from the start with a 5,000-MP shot, or even a 3,000-MP one. Check and mate.

Another fascinating thing about the Magic Pistol was the fact that it didn't

leak any of the magic poured into it. I wasn't sure how exactly it worked, but when I double-checked with my Demon Eyes, I confirmed zero leakage. Based on what I understood so far, I thought it might be safe to leave the gun loaded with bullets, but...no, I'd be better off not doing that. Not after what I saw earlier.

Yeah, let's just leave it unloaded when I'm not using it. It'd be piss-my-pants scary if it randomly exploded. Now a little nervous about the unexpectedly, frighteningly powerful Magic Pistol, I stored it away in Inventory. At the same time, a big, slow-moving shadow appeared at the cave entrance.

"Yo! Finally managed to shake off Iluna and the others, huh? Good job."

It was my second dungeon monster, the fenrir. It looked kinda tired. I guessed that was probably because the other three had forced it to keep them company this whole time. Before I'd headed out, even Lefi had joined Iluna and Shii in getting rowdy with the wolf. She'd been that desperate to feel any amount of joy after getting hit with the sweets ban. *No wonder you're exhausted, buddy.*

At my words, the fenrir sat down on the spot with a small howl. It bowed its head as if saying, "Thank you for your kindness." For some reason, it gave me the impression of a world-weary man. I'd always had a vague suspicion, but the fenrir's existence convinced me once and for all that somehow, I had the ability to communicate with the dungeon monsters I summoned.

It wasn't *real* communication since they didn't say anything back, but I could pretty much understand what they wanted to express. When I'd been watching Shii "talk" to the fenrir in the dungeon earlier, I was pretty sure they were "communicating" with each other in the exact same way as fellow dungeon monsters. They probably instinctively knew what the other was trying to say.

Oh, by the way, this wolf pup was male. Also, Iluna had named it "Fluffrir" — presumably a combination of "fluffy" and "fenrir." How did I find this out? Well, when I checked his stats again just now, the section with his name was no longer blank. Instead, it had updated to "Fluffrir." Frankly, I felt kinda bad for him with a name like that. I might have made a mistake telling Iluna it was a fenrir; it didn't take a genius to figure out how she came up with the name in the first place.

...*But maybe we can make this work.* I'd call him "Rir" and that would be my special nickname for him.

"Oh, yeah, you have some interesting abilities, right? Will you show them to me?"

Rir had seven abilities. Three of them—Super Speed, Morphing Chains, and Body Modification—were special abilities, and the other four—Claw Combat, Ice Magic, Lightning Magic, and Danger Detection—were regular ones. I was most curious about the three unique ones, so I relayed that to him. Rir agreed to my request with a nod and stood up quickly. Then he put his unique abilities into action.

Super Speed was pretty much exactly what it sounded like: the ability to rapidly increase his movement speed. When he used it, he could move so fast from one point to another that it looked like he disappeared.

With the Morphing Chains special ability, he could make chains appear in his surroundings and control them. Depending on how much magic he used, he could change the thickness and strength of the chains.

As for his last special ability, Body Modification, Rir could change the size of his body, making it bigger or smaller. He could even shrink down to the size of a normal wolf. At least I didn't have to worry about Rir fitting in the dungeon anymore.

"Daaamnn, you're so cool!"

Morphing Chains was easily the most impressive of the group. What incredible versatility. Based on what I saw, the Chains could be used as shields or even footholds in midair. Of course, they could also be used as normal chains to bind enemies, so yeah, it could be ridiculously strong depending on how he used it. *I'd love to have that ability too...* But unfortunately for me, it was a special ability for a reason. Even if I could obtain it, I bet it'd cost way too much DP.

Anyway, back to Rir himself. He looked so happy when I praised him. There wasn't a noticeable difference in his expression, but I could tell by his tail. With the way he was wagging that thing, he was definitely in a good mood.

Hmm... While I watched him, I got the best idea. I couldn't *not* try it out, so I immediately called up the interface and opened the DP Catalog. I found what I was looking for and bought it, then flung it as far as I could.

"Hey, Rir! Fetch!"

"...!"

Rir seemed shocked but intrigued. What I'd thrown was a frisbee. When he first saw it, he looked conflicted, but he was pretty quick to give in to his instinctive temptation to chase after the flying disc. He charged off at full speed and caught it beautifully in midair, then turned toward me and galloped back.

"Hell yeah! Round 2! Go!"

I took the frisbee from Rir and threw it again, this time with all my demon lord might. It zoomed way off into the distance.

"Ha ha ha ha! Wait— No! Rir, stop! Hold o— Oof!"

Rir had caught the frisbee again and was storming back my way. Totally caught up in the fun now, he pounced on me with his entire weight and tackled me to the ground.

"Gah, you've done it now! Get ready for a world of hurt!" I said with a playful grin on my face. Pretending like I was about to get my revenge, I pushed my arms against his body and started roughhousing with him.

"Hooo, damn... You fenrirs are really something else, aren't ya?"

I didn't know why I said that, but it felt right as I lay panting on the cave floor. We'd been play-wrestling for a while now. I'd always considered myself more of a cat person, but actually playing with a dog made me realize that they're cute too. Okay, he's a wolf, but close enough.

As Rir rested on the ground next to me, he gave a sudden huff as if gasping in dismay at his behavior. I caught a glimpse of what looked like self-loathing on his face. He seemed upset with himself for giving in to his base instincts by playing with me. It made me wonder if obeying his inherent nature like that hurt his pride. I had a lot of fun, though, so I thought it was fine if he stayed true

to himself.

All things considered, Iluna really hit the jackpot with this guy. Yeah, his abilities kicked major ass, but it wasn't just that. I checked the monster summons section in the DP Catalog because I wanted to know how much it would have normally cost to buy a fenrir, and let's just say that it was a real quick find when I had the page sorted with the most expensive monsters first.

I knew there would always be someone better or stronger, but that didn't mean he couldn't grow up to be like the fenrir Lefi had struggled to beat in the past. He still had the potential to become the undisputed champion of this world.

"Hey, Rir... Can you sense the dungeon's energy? Y'know, its power?" I asked him while still lying down. Rir lifted his head and gave me a single nod in response without moving from his stretched-out position next to me. "Lefi's domain goes from here to the top of the mountain. But once you start heading down toward the foot of the mountain, it's the dungeon's—my territory. I want you to live out there and hunt monsters."

Shii was as good as dead if I made it fight, so I was content with it just staying in the dungeon as a pet, but Rir was another story entirely. His base stats were higher than mine, meaning he had the strength to fight. I couldn't let his power stay dormant; doing that would only put us at a disadvantage. I needed him to be active and relentless on the hunt to earn as much DP as possible.

That's right, buddy. Do your best to get stronger so we can both level up. Then I can live an easy life.

"Besides that, you can live however you want to. I go out a lot, so we can play again when I do. We can even hunt together. Just remember one thing, though—you're a part of the family now too, so make sure you come home every now and then, okay? We don't want Iluna getting sad 'cause she hasn't seen that mug of yours in a while."

That's right, your home is with us. Absorbing my words, Rir shifted my way, then bowed his head deeply.



The events of a certain day.

“Wheeeh?!”

I found it. I freaking found it. I jumped up from the throne in a rush, which dropped Shii, who had been camping in my lap, onto the floor. It gave me an annoyed look, and even Iluna was looking at me, clearly weirded out by the sound I’d just made.

None of that really registered for me, though, because I’d found it. I’d found what I’d been searching for for so long. I figured it might be possible, so I looked and looked, and it turned out that I was totally right.

“Heh heh heh... Mwa ha ha! Bah ha ha ha ha! I’m going to fly, GoGo!”

Not to toot my own horn or anything, but that was an excellent maniacal laugh. Bravo, me. And with that, I sprinted out of the throne room.

Let me make something clear: I wasn’t losing my mind. It was just that I’d found it. After Rir demonstrated his Morphing Chains ability a while back, I started to wonder if I could find it in the DP Catalog. Sure, it was a special ability, but I didn’t think it’d hurt to at least check. I’d been scrolling through the pages on and off since then, and today, a different ability caught my eye. Oh yeah, I’m talking about Flight, baby!

I’d seen a lot of cool-sounding abilities when I was scrolling through the long list, but I hadn’t come across Flight or anything like it in the section with regular abilities. After a few days of trying, I was almost ready to give up. I started to wonder if maybe it wasn’t actually something you could buy, maybe it was something you had to be born with like Lefi was, but I was happy to announce that I was wrong. It just wasn’t in the normal list because, as it turned out, it was a special ability.

I bought the ability the second I found it, no questions asked. It cost more than ten times what a regular ability cost, but that didn’t matter. I literally did not care that two-thirds of my DP immediately disappeared. Why not? The spirit of adventure, of course. That was crucial to surviving in this world. A certain King of the Pirates sailed all over the world and risked his life countless times chasing it, so I couldn’t let anything hold me back on my quest either. No matter how much DP I had to spend, it wasn’t going to stop me.

You can bet your ass I didn't tell Lefi what I'd done, though. If I did, I was sure she would've been all, "You always badger us not to spend recklessly, so I find your hypocrisy in this matter inexcusable!" It wasn't like she knew how DP worked anyway, so if anything, I was doing us both a favor by keeping my mouth shut.

My body still buzzing with excitement from my discovery, I finally made my wings—I still wasn't sure if they were more bat-like or dragon-like—appear again. They'd been hidden away since my first night in this world, but now, the jet-black appendages were soaking up the twinkling sunshine. Unlike the Dark Wings group from the Tails game series on Earth—heh—these dark wings were real.

Wait, that wasn't the best description either. Until just now, they'd been decorations—a glorified cosplay, basically. And that was exactly why I'd transform them into true wings now. They would do their job and carry me across the sky wherever I wanted to go, bridging the gap between heaven and earth. Today was the day I'd finally soar, free as a bird, over this magnificent landscape!

"Time to lift off! Onward, to the vast blue sky!"

With that shout of joy, I started flapping my wings.

...

.....

.....

Huh?

Nothing. They didn't respond. Not even a little bit. Okay, maybe a few twitchy flutters, but nowhere near strong enough to fly.

"Let's try this again. Time to lift off! Onward, to the vast blue sky!"

I psyched myself up for another round...but the sky didn't get any closer. *Why isn't it working?!* I knew I'd activated the ability correctly; I could feel it as a part of me. Once an ability was activated, the user could sense its presence. It was like waving your arms with your eyes closed—you knew your arms were there

and moving even if you couldn't see them. I knew I had the Flight ability, and yet...I couldn't fly.

“Why?! Why can't I fly?!”

After that, I tried over and over again to make my wings beat. I even jumped around like a maniac to see if I could get enough momentum to take off, just like a baby bird learning how to fly. I kept looking up at the sky in my desperate attempts to launch myself into the air, but my body stubbornly remained on the ground.

“Wh-Why...?” I could barely talk because I was panting so hard. *Is it possible that...that I'm incapable of flying?* That thought crossed my mind as I continued to wheeze from exhaustion. Just like how it was pointless for monsters to have cooking skills, were my wings just for show? Did they not actually function?

My excitement level was dropping really fast. I felt like I'd climbed all the way to the top of a mountain, only to be shoved off of it and end up at the bottom again. The wide-open sky stretched out above me, so clear and limitless. Its unreachable beauty was like a knife in my heart.

D-Does my dream of soaring through that boundless sky end here...? My vision went dark in despair. My knees buckled and I fell to the ground, shattered by this reality.

“No.”

Get a grip. Stay strong. It was too early to lose hope. My devotion to the sky was stronger than that. I wouldn't let myself give up when I'd only just gotten started. Not like this. *Now, think. Think hard.* The Flight ability didn't have levels, but I'd only learned it a little while ago, so maybe that was the problem. It was very possible that I was just bad at it right now, just like my mishaps with the Swordsmanship ability. *Then I'll just ask someone how to use it.* I knew the perfect person.

Back in the dungeon.

“...And so you throw yourself on my mercy.”

“Affirmative. I humbly request the aid of the Supreme Dragon in this

venture.”

I was literally on my hands and knees in front of Lefi.

“It sickens me to see you behave in this manner, but surely you have not forgotten the misery you condemned me to only recently, Yuki. When you unjustly forbade me from consuming sweets for three days. As such, I find your sudden change in attitude quite selfish.”

“Then shall I lick the soles of your feet in penance?”

“Y-You cannot be that desperate...”

Lefi looked disgusted, but what could I say? I didn’t give a squat about my pride if it meant I could fly. In my previous life on Earth, mankind had been obsessed with the heavens since ancient times, and I was lucky enough to arrive in a world where I could actually fly. Fat freaking chance I was gonna pass it up.

“Bah, there is no need for you to disgrace yourself like that. You do understand what I require in return though, yes? I am sure that you do.”

The silver-haired dragon girl made a circle with her thumb and pointer finger. She wasn’t talking about money, of course. She meant doughnuts.

Wait, seriously? That’s all she wanted? Not about to look a gift horse in the mouth, I immediately bought an assorted pack that contained three different kinds of doughnuts. To make it look all fancy for her, I bought a nice, white box to put them in.

“Wh-What in the world...? Oh, my! Such an inviting aroma!” Lefi stared at the box nervously, then very carefully opened it to check out what was inside. It was like she thought of it as some sort of treasure chest. “Do my eyes deceive me?! Th-Th-*Three* varieties?! And they all appear so delectable!”

She stared at me in amazement. I could kinda understand her surprise—I only ever gave her regular ring doughnuts because they were the cheapest. Compared to those, these were clearly much higher quality. To her, at least. But her standards for everything were based on her experience living in this world, so she was operating under the assumption that all sweets cost me a lot to make.

She wasn't completely off the mark on that, though. Sweets were valuable on Earth too. Considering her stunned response, she definitely thought I'd dropped some serious cash on these doughnuts. I hadn't, but she didn't need to know that.

If I converted the price of the doughnuts from DP to actual dollars, they cost me like six bucks. Nowhere near expensive. That said, seeing her reaction, I had to admit that I felt kinda guilty since it was like I'd been tricking an innocent child this whole time.

"Here. You can have this too."

"Wh-What?! C-Can this truly be the fabled cas-tel-la?! The confection you have only given to me once before?!"

Damn, so that's what you think of castella? She was right about the fact that I'd only bought it once, but calling it "fabled" was a little extreme, even if it *was* one of the few expensive desserts in the Catalog. The one time we had it, I'd assumed she just wanted to gorge like usual, so I hadn't bought it again. But she'd actually, honestly enjoyed it. Huh.

"Truth be told, I am bewildered that you would bestow such a feast upon me when you often complain like a fishwife over every expenditure, but I understand now. I accept your fervor for flight as earnest. As you have gone this far to prove yourself, I shall forgive your past transgression. Rest assured that I will mold you into the Conqueror—no, for *I* am the Conqueror of the Skies. Ah, yes! I will mold you into the Demon Lord of the Skies!"

"The Demon Lord of the Skies, huh?"

Yeah, there was no way she'd give up her "Conqueror" title to anyone.

"Nooo! No fair, Lady Lefifi!" Iluna shouted. She must not have liked that, because until just now, she had been quietly watching everything play out.

"Heh heh, to the victor go the spoils, Iluna. This is my remuneration for the labor I must undertake in educating Yuki. You must do the same if you desire these sweets as well."

So decreed Her Majesty The Conqueror of Dragonkind. It was crazy to me that she was so arrogant when her daily routine was eating and sleeping. I almost

told her that to her face, but I just couldn't risk ruining her good mood. She wouldn't teach me if I did that, so I had to bite my tongue hard. *Real* hard.

"Yukiki, I'll lay-burr too! So gimme something sweet!"

"All right, then you can help me make dinner tonight. If you do, I'll give you dessert."

When I first got here, we'd only eaten premade stuff I bought from the DP Catalog. Once I added the kitchen, though, I started cooking as much as possible. The food in the Catalog felt too much like takeout and it didn't take long for me to get fed up with it.

By the way, I was in charge of cooking. Lefi had no idea how to cook since she'd never had to learn, and despite me thinking that she had domestic skills, the most Iluna could handle were easy tasks like shredding lettuce. She was just too young to do anything else. It wasn't like I was a master chef or anything, but I also couldn't deny that the more I cooked—even if it was out of necessity at first—the more I actually started to enjoy it. Now, I had a lot of fun trying out different recipes. Who'd have thought?

"Okay! I'll try really hard!"

"Gah! Dessert, you say...? That does sound appealing..."

"If you help with dinner too, then I'll give you some as a separate reward."

"Hmm... I have reconsidered. I no longer require dessert."

The scowl on Lefi's face as she gave her final answer made me snort-laugh. She hated having to help that much, huh?

With all that settled, Lefi and I headed outside through the cave. Iluna was sleepy, so she was taking an afternoon nap back in the dungeon.

"Mmm... It has been some time since I felt the sunlight. How refreshing."

"Oh yeah, it *has* been a while since you've left the dungeon."

She would go out to make DP whenever she bugged me to buy her expensive sweets, but other than that, she spent basically all of her time in the dungeon. It almost felt like she was part of the NEET army now. What I found strange, though, was how she didn't gain any weight at all despite her massive appetite

and total lack of exercise. It had to be because her human form was just temporary, which made me wonder if she could use the rest of her dragon powers without using her real body.

“By the way, how’s your territory looking? You know, since you’ve been neglecting it this whole time.”

“I kept this region secure from invaders solely for the sake of its fine honey. I am no longer concerned with it now that I have the pleasure of consuming even finer delicacies. If you desire it, I will relinquish my domain to you.”

You have got to be kidding me. She took control of all this land for a stupid reason like that?! Now I felt like a dumbass for not expanding my dungeon’s territory into hers. Being considerate had been a complete waste of time. I couldn’t help shooting an irritated glance her way, but then I remembered that selfishness was a default state of being for her. You can’t teach an old dragon new tricks, so I let out a small sigh and decided to just let it go. It was time to figure out this flying business anyway, so I made my hidden wings reappear.

“My, my. You boast quite the splendid pair of wings, Yuki!”

I had no idea what Lefi found so splendid about them, but she liked them so much that I could feel her staring a hole through me.

“Yeah, well, they get in the way usually, so I— Whoa! Hey, stop that! Don’t touch them! It tickles!”

The silver-haired girl had—unconsciously, it seemed—reached out and started stroking my wings. It felt weird and tickly, so I twisted away and jumped out of her reach. Even though they were made of magic, the fact that I could feel Lefi touching them meant that my wings definitely possessed normal physical properties. Learned something new just now.

While I thought over the fact that my wings were actually real when I had them out, I was also dodging Lefi, who refused to stop chasing me. She *really* wanted to touch my wings, though she gave up pretty quickly.

“It is my belief that you dishonor such resplendent wings by keeping them hidden.”

“Resplendent”? Yeah freaking right. I wished they were more birdlike; they

were too bony as is. Apparently, dragons had a different aesthetic sense. *Guess that saying about beauty being in the eye of the beholder is true after all.*

“I think your wings are way better looking than mine. Hey, you better drop that hand—or else.”

Thinking back to the first time we met, I definitely remembered the feeling of being overwhelmed by Lefi’s insane stats. But I also realized something: that was the only time I’d seen her true form as the legendary dragon. She was so dignified and majestic when she was like that, and that powerful presence of hers was even more memorable than her gorgeous wings.

Of course, her current human appearance was lovely too. It’d had a certain mystique when I first saw it. Unfortunately, though, when she was in this form, my brain couldn’t think of her as anything but the typical annoying kid who lives in every neighborhood. Basically, she wasn’t dignified or majestic in the slightest.

“Th-That is a given. I-In any case, you will achieve nothing by attempting to court me,” the silver-haired dragon girl stammered in embarrassment. She probably wasn’t used to being complimented. But hold that thought. I needed to rewind what just happened. Did she *actually* think I was trying to hit on her because I said I liked her wings?

Also, I needed her to chill the hell out with that reaction. She was super cute to begin with, but combined with the way she was blushing, it almost made me think that her “pure, innocent little girl” look wasn’t just for show. My idiot brain couldn’t handle being tricked like that. I wouldn’t know what to say.

“Hmm... Well, I would venture to say your usual self is akin to an unsweetened doughnut, while I would liken the winged you to the sweetest of cakes. A temptation, to be sure. N-Naturally, you still do not compare to my own greatness, but I would be so generous as to affirm your splendor in comparison to other dragons.”

“Oh, uh, thanks? I think?”

I didn’t completely understand her metaphor, but I was pretty sure she’d just complimented me. Fine by me.

“Y-Yes. You should feel honored, for I hardly ever speak words of praise.”
Regaining her composure, Lefi quietly cleared her throat. “That aside, let us get to the heart of the matter. You possess Demon Eyes, yes? Activate the ability and observe me closely.”

“Roger that.”

Lefi’s stunning wings unfurled from her back as soon as she saw me nod. Unlike my pitch-black wings, her silver ones sparkled in the sunlight.

“Those...don’t look like the wings from your dragon form.”

“Correct. These are substitute wings I created with magic, although the function remains the same.”

I verified what she said with my Demon Eyes. They really were forged from her magic, which made sense when I thought about it. Her real wings would’ve been *way* too big for her current form.

“More importantly, Yuki, I believe you have something to say, do you not? Fulfill your oath.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah, right. Uhhh... M-My lady, your shining wings boast such beauty that they rival the moon as it illuminates the night.”

“As I thought, such utterances are unbecoming of your character.”

D-Damn you! Even though you made me do that as part of our deal...! Lefi smirked at my twitching, aggravated face. She knew I wouldn’t say what I really felt if I wanted to fly. She’d totally taken me for a ride. Ugh.

“Heh heh. Now then, it is time for the real test to begin. Pay close attention.”

As she spoke, I saw a dense cloud of magic start to swirl in her wings. *Is... Is she streaming her magic into her wings?* While I was busy trying to work that all out, Lefi gave them a big, strong flap. By the time I figured it out, she was already up in the air. The way she flew was absolutely fascinating; it was like I was finally seeing just how elegant and graceful the Supreme Dragon really was.

“Woow!” I shouted in wonder at the sight above me.

Why didn’t I think of that? I had just assumed that my magic naturally flowed through my wings, what with them being made of magic and all. It never

occurred to me to actually *use* magical energy on them.

“Do you understand, baby bird? It is your turn to do the same.”

I nodded eagerly and immediately pushed my magic through the wings on my back. I focused all my energy on them, and... *They moved!* I’d only been able to get sad little flutters before, but now, I could control them as easily as I could control my arms and legs. My wings finally felt like they were a natural part of my body.

So that’s how it’s done. Before, it was like I was trying to pedal a bike with a rusty chain. No wonder I hadn’t gone anywhere fast.

“Wonderful! Now lift yourself into the air!”

Listening to Lefi, I enthusiastically flapped my now fully operational wings. I could sense my whole body floating gently, and at the same time, I felt a breeze stroke my cheek. Only then did I realize that I’d already left the ground.

“Hoooooly shit! Wait, no! I’m still going up! How do I stop?!”

Flight was definitely great and all, but I was heading straight up into the sky. Fast too, and I had no idea how to stop. I could see the ground moving farther and farther away. Honestly, it freaked me out big time.

“You are utilizing too much power. Reduce your input,” Lefi said from right beside me. I’d reached her without even noticing.

I rushed to start decreasing the amount of magic circulating through my wings, just like she’d told me to do. It happened quicker than I thought, most likely because I’d gotten pretty good at handling my magic. I was pretty sure I still looked supes awkward, but I somehow managed to get myself to hover in midair. At least I wasn’t going up anymore.

“Incredible...”

I stared down in awe. Now that I wasn’t panicking like an idiot, I could actually enjoy the view. The clouds and sun were closer than I expected, and the world below me should have been the same natural wonderland I always saw on my outings, but it felt completely different from up here. It gave me goosebumps—the good kind. I’d dreamed of how amazing it would be to have such an

expansive view of, well, everything, but now that I was actually seeing it, it was a thousand times more breathtaking than it was in my dreams.

“Heh heh. Spectacular, is it not?”

Lefi watched me with a sort of cocky expression on her face. I could understand that look, though. I’d want to brag too if I could literally be on top of the world. Which I was right now. Mesmerized by it all, I fell into a sort of daze. I only broke out of it when Lefi started talking to me.

“Come, Yuki. Follow me. I shall show you the spirit of flight. Assuming you can even keep pace with me, that is,” the supreme dragon girl with the silver hair challenged me with an arrogant laugh.

“Oh yeah? You sure you wanna do this? Warning you now that I’m feeling invincible now that I’ve made the skies mine.”

“What utter nonsense from one who is yet a chick. Allow me to show you the true meaning of ‘invincible’!”

“Hey! Wait!”

Lefi suddenly started accelerating away from me. I poured more magic into my wings, though, and stayed hot on her dragon tail. We gave ourselves a little bit more speed, and just like that, Lefi and I treated ourselves to a stroll through the clouds.



Adventurers. Those who chase the unknown, seek the unknown, and confront the unknown. Those who accept all sorts of commissions, then receive compensation for completing them. Because of their outstanding achievements, quite a few top adventurers have become nobles with their own lands. In other words, being an adventurer was a dream job with the potential to earn people immense fame and wealth.

All sorts of people were considered adventurers. Some accepted commissions, which were anything from defeating monsters to gathering materials, and others were scholarly types who did things like excavating historical sites. Sure, they were lumped together in the same group, but every adventurer was unique.

Regardless of the job, adventurers all had one thing in common: their physical strength. That was a necessity for all types of work. A single step outside of human settlements would put one in an area inhabited by monsters and other nonhuman species. For those beings, death was nothing more than another part of life.

As such, unbending willpower and courage were necessary for those committed to life as an adventurer, especially considering the state of the world. Their stories would never be written if they didn't have the fortitude to endure any situation, no matter how impossible it seemed. Anyone who lacked those vital characteristics either culled themselves from the lifestyle early or stagnated as a bottom-tier weakling. That was what it meant to be an adventurer.

Naturally, a ranking system existed to sort adventurers into groups based on their strength. The lowest level was Bronze, followed by Iron, Silver, Gold, Mythril, and Adamantite, with Orichalcum at the very top. We were ranked as Mythril-class, which was the third rank from the top, but the difference between each of the top three classes was best described as exponential.

Orichalcum-class adventurers possessed power rivaling that of nonhumans, while Adamantite-classes were ferocious warriors unmatched in combat. Even among the countless number of adventurers, only a few dozen had the strength to reach the Adamantite and Orichalcum ranks. All that said, it wouldn't be wrong to claim that we also helped lead the pack as Mythril-class adventurers—we *were* in one of the top three ranks, after all. That was why the Guild had requested our assistance. The Guild was created by adventurers a long time ago to unify and aid them, so it was actually fairly common for the organization to post jobs of all kinds.

The town we were based in, Alfiro, was a frontier town situated right on the front lines. As one would expect of such a town, there were many adventurers here experienced in fighting monsters of all kinds. Sadly, however, not a single Orichalcum-class adventurer remained here because the government secluded them near the seat of power.

A few Adamantite-class folks were around, but they were off on another mission, hence the Guild administrators had sought out the next best thing:

Mythril-class adventurers currently looking for work. We had finished another job not too long ago and stayed in town to recuperate, which was why the request had come our way. They wanted us to investigate strange occurrences in the Demonic Forest.

The monsters living in the Demonic Forest were strongest in this particular vicinity, and there were also far more of them compared to other places. People said that once someone entered the Forest, they would never be able to leave. It truly was uncharted territory. The environment inside was quite harsh too, with the never-ending struggle for existence inherent to the natural world. If a civilian were to wander into the Forest, it was extremely likely that they'd be dead within an hour—or so the tales went.

For that reason, adventurers below Gold-class were forbidden from entering the Forest at all, including those who specialized in monster extermination. Even Mythril-class and above were prohibited from venturing too far in. Severe punishment awaited anyone who broke either regulation.

The environment wasn't the only reason access to the Demonic Forest was controlled so rigidly, though. There was also a creature that made its home deep in the mountains of the Forest that was a great cause for concern. Because of its staggering power, it was known simply as the Supreme Dragon. Dragons were the strongest living beings in this world, and the Supreme Dragon was the mightiest of them all, spoken of as a legend due to its fearsome exploits. It was fittingly classed as a Calamity in the danger hierarchy.

A creature designated as a Calamity-level peril was said to have the power to annihilate an entire country. But according to historical records, the Supreme Dragon had destroyed several nations at the height of its rampage, killing every single member of every single strike force sent out to subdue it. To stop its violent frenzy, the feuding nations of the time established an alliance for the sole purpose of subjugating the Supreme Dragon, and a combined host of 300,000 troops was sent to destroy it. According to primary sources from back then, even with an inordinately large number of Orichalcum-and Adamantite-class adventurers in that host, fewer than 500 soldiers returned alive. All the others were quite literally reduced to embers in a single night.

There were other bits of lore about the Supreme Dragon as well. It

supposedly altered the topography of a location with a single breath. Another tale said that its magic was so powerful that only a few others in existence—humans, demons, or otherwise—could even begin to match it. The Supreme Dragon used the full might of its prodigious magical energy like it was casting a novice-level spell. Many of the misfortunes it orchestrated, such as reports of it blowing entire mountains to smithereens, were initially mistaken as natural disasters.

Despite all that, however, other information passed down through the ages stated that the Supreme Dragon had very little interest in living things besides itself. It was said that the beast would merely retaliate when it was attacked, and for that reason, all the countries in the region had handed down official edicts declaring that no offenses were to be made against it. Those ordinances continued to hold even today.

In return, for reasons unknown, the Supreme Dragon retreated to its lair deep in the Demonic Forest a bit over a hundred years ago. It had rarely been sighted since then, but the situation had changed recently when strange things started happening. Despite hardly ever showing itself within its own domain during the past century, there had been multiple eyewitness accounts of the dragon venturing *outside* its territory.

Moreover, the Guild had received many reports about a large-scale turf war occurring within the Forest. The monsters who lost their battles against the unknown combatant had started scattering to other areas. When these incidents first occurred, all signs pointed to the Supreme Dragon as the cause; it was assumed that the monsters escaped to other areas because they were afraid of what would happen to them with the Supreme Dragon active again. Once they'd reached their destinations, the supposition had been they'd engaged in territorial disputes to reestablish their supremacy. That wasn't the case at all, however, since there were many confirmed locations of monster battles unrelated to sightings of the Supreme Dragon. Therefore, the Guild suspected that there was another reason both the Supreme Dragon and the other monsters in the area were on the move.

The fact that the monsters in the Demonic Forest were being defeated troubled the Guild. Any creatures living in the Forest were vastly more powerful

than those living in other areas. They were strongly attracted to places with rich concentrations of mana, which the Forest had in spades, so they seldom went near human habitations with low amounts of mana. The displaced monsters hadn't yet caused any damage to human settlements, but the Guild couldn't afford to let its guard down. They wanted to find out what exactly was going on, which was how we'd ended up as the ones investigating the situation.

Under normal circumstances, we wouldn't have accepted such a dangerous job. But if we turned down every single Guild request that seemed even remotely worrying, our reputation as adventurers would take a hit. Even if that weren't a consideration, the fact remained that the situation was too unstable to leave alone. Plus, there weren't any others who could have taken on the work besides us. With no other choice, the three of us that made up our party had reluctantly accepted the request and headed into the Demonic Forest.

"That damned hellspawn!"

"Less whining, more running! Unless you *want* to die!"

"I can't believe the rumors were true!"

We were desperately trying to outrun the monster chasing us. Leading our pack was Reyes, our party's scout. Right behind him was Lulour, our conjurer, and bringing up the rear was me, Griff. The beast pursuing us was a Horned Tiger. In its savage hunt to catch its prey—us—it mowed down thick trees as if they were spindly saplings.

The danger level system for monsters was divided into seven categories: Harmless, Hazardous, Human, War, Disaster, Catastrophe, and Calamity. Monsters designated Human-level dangers, for example, could cause damage equivalent to that of man-made events such as fires, and War-level dangers posed threats on the same scale as the consequences of war.

The Horned Tiger was classified as a War-level danger. An Adamantite-class adventurer could take on a monster of that level alone, but it would take a whole party of Mythril-class adventurers to defeat one, and even then, it would only be by the skin of their teeth. In other areas, War-level monsters were powerful enough to be considered guardians or masters of their surroundings.

There were more War-level monsters in the Demonic Forest than there were

stars in the sky. That was an exaggeration, of course, but not much of one, and it didn't make the situation any less strange. As Mythrill-class adventurers, we'd journeyed into these woods many times before, but a creature like this should have been living deep in the interior, a place we'd never broached. We had only entered the Forest a few hours ago and were still on its outskirts, where monsters of its danger level didn't live. It was far too soon to expect to encounter one. Or at least, it should have been.

The tiger's condition was odd as well. Based on its painfully thin body, it looked as if it had lost the struggle for survival and hadn't eaten anything for days. The intense hunger in its single-minded gaze was obviously problematic for us, and yet we could easily see the survival instinct driving its desperate pursuit of food.

"Lulour! Is your magic ready yet?!"

"No! Less than a tenth of it is back!"

That was the unfortunate reason our Mythrill-class party was running around trying to escape from the beast. It wasn't the first War-level monster we'd encountered today either; we'd already fought a number of others. Not only was Lulour's magic almost completely depleted because of all the battles, but we'd also run out of mana potions attempting to keep pace with the monsters. Reyes and I were running out of strength as well. We'd gone above and beyond with our equipment because of the reported abnormalities and still ended up with results this unlucky. I profoundly regretted accepting this request now. I should have turned it down regardless of the impact on our reputation.

"Grrr!"

"Ahhh!"

Using some sort of ability, the Horned Tiger sped up drastically. It got ahead of us in the blink of an eye, blocking our escape route.

"Tch! I guess I have no choice then!"

Steeling myself against the prospect of death, I readied my sword—but the moment I did, something made a whooshing noise. A second later, I heard the distinct, wet sound of flesh being crushed. When I turned around, the Horned

Tiger was lying motionless on the ground, and an entirely different beast standing in its place.

“Hrng!”

Frozen stiff, I couldn't form any actual words. That muffled scream was the best I could manage. The beast standing in front of me was a huge wolf with fur so beautiful I was almost spellbound. Limber, muscled limbs as thick as logs were attached to a body as tall as a house. Its huge mouth was proportional to the rest of its frame, and I caught a glimpse of its sharp fangs. It could probably swallow humans our size in one gulp.

This one is dangerous. That thought had been swirling in my mind since the moment I saw it. As an adventurer, I'd muddled my way through a lot of tough situations, but my instincts, honed from years of experience, were screaming that this beast was an even greater threat than anything I'd faced before. Those same instincts begged me to run, but I couldn't move. If I took a single step, the Grim Reaper would end my life with one swing of his scythe. That image had seized control of my mind, and because of it, I couldn't move.

I mustered up what little willpower I could to check on Reyes and Lulour. Peeking out of the corners of my eyes, going from left to right, I could see that my comrades were paralyzed too, absolutely transfixed by the overpowering presence in front of us.

I wasn't sure how long we'd been standing stock-still. A minute? Ten? Perhaps even an hour. It was impossible to say, but then, after glancing at us, the enormous wolf turned away as if it found us boring. It merely snapped up its prey with its massive jaws and left.

The moment it left our field of view was the moment we all realized we were still in the Demonic Forest. Lulour suddenly collapsed to the ground, the tension quickly leaving her. But I couldn't fault her for that, because a cold sweat still ran down my whole body. I had the crazy thought that if I let my guard down now, my knees would buckle and I'd burst into hysterical laughter.

“W-We were a hair's breadth from dying...” Lulour muttered in astonishment, though her voice also betrayed a hint of relief.

“That wolf was surely Disaster-level...” Reyes's response showed he agreed

with her.

“You’re both right, but did you notice? It... It wore a collar.”

It wasn’t a normal collar either. As if someone were boldly claiming, “Indeed, this wolf is my pet,” the collar wrapped around its neck was beautifully engraved.

“What?! Does that mean someone put that beast to work?!” Reyes cried, watching me in shock. I could understand his feelings since I was still having trouble believing my own eyes. A Disaster-level monster was powerful enough to require the full might of a military to stop it, so theoretically, there shouldn’t be any species in existence with the strength or means to subjugate a beast of that level. Humans, humanoids, and therianthropes were far too weak for that. Not even demons, who fought constantly with mankind, should have been capable of such a feat.

“Perhaps... Perhaps an unthinkable existence has made its home in this forest.”

That existence possessed enough might to conquer a Disaster-class monster *and* terrify the other monsters in the Demonic Forest. Whatever it was, it lived somewhere deep in the woods. A chill ran down my spine when I considered that it could be carefully observing us even now.

“In any case, we need to leave *now*. The situation is clearly beyond our capacity,” I said.

“Agreed. We wouldn’t be able to handle it even if we had infinite lives,” Reyes responded.

“You’re right. I don’t want to be here a second longer.” Lulour sounded exhausted.

With all three of us in agreement, we turned around and headed back as fast as our legs could carry us, almost like we were running away from something.



Soaring through the sky felt incredible. It was almost like I was one with the wind; I was totally free to explore anywhere and everywhere. I knew it didn’t

make sense, but even the sunshine seemed more welcoming than usual, as if the big, bright star was gently watching over me.

From time to time, I saw gigantic birds and wyverns flying too. I'd always just kinda ignored them, but now that I was a part of the flying family too, I felt a sort of bond with them. Never mind that I was apparently the only one who actually thought that, seeing as they didn't hesitate to attack if given the chance.

"Hmm... All things considered, though, I'd love to get better at flying."

I sighed as I wiped off the blood splattered on my cheek. I definitely wasn't as clumsy as I used to be at it—I'd practiced enough that I was at least halfway decent now—but compared to how graceful Lefi was when she flew, I was still very much a baby bird. That depressed the life out of me.

"Exquisite" was the best way I could describe the way she had flown. When she soared through the air, it almost seemed like the sky itself and even the world around us were specifically created as a stage set just for her. Her movements were so elegant that it was easy to get lost in them and mistake her for an illusion. She'd proudly called herself the Conqueror of the Skies, and after watching her that day, I could see where that level of self-confidence came from. Lefi in her dragon form was so terrifying that she nearly made me piss my pants, but when she descended from the sky in her human form, I practically mistook her for an angel.

"Ah ha, there he is! Rir! Hey, Rir!"

While all those thoughts were running through my head, I'd been scouring the ground below me looking for Rir. Once I found him, I started gliding in his direction, calling out his name. As soon as he realized I was there, Fluffrir, the wolf with the gorgeous pure-white fur, bowed his head slightly. You couldn't tell by his face, but the way he was wagging his tail gave away how happy he was. *Jeez, what an adorable puppy.*

"Good boy! How've you been? Judging by how nice and shiny your fur is, I can tell you've been eating well, huh?"

Monsters created by the dungeon use the dungeon's magic as their primary "food" source, but they can eat regular food like meat and fish too, so it's

possible for them to live normal lives outside of the dungeon. There is a caveat, though: if they go too long without absorbing the dungeon's magic, their bodies will start to deteriorate. Their abilities too. If they want to survive, they can't stay away from the dungeon for a super long time.

That was why I had Rir stay inside the dungeon's territory. It wasn't really about the DP so much as it was making sure nothing bad happened to him. I'd also told him that he could eat anything he killed instead of bringing the corpses to the dungeon.

To recap, the four ways to obtain DP, from best to worst, were killing intruders, converting enemies' corpses into energy, having non-dungeon monsters in the dungeon, and passive generation. It made me kinda sad to let all that income go, but it would have made me way sadder to let a creature live off magic alone. I didn't want that kind of meaningless existence for Rir. Even a person who loved curry wouldn't want to eat it for every meal every day. They'd get tired of it real fast. And anyone who *wouldn't* mind eating the same thing day in and day out needed to get their taste buds checked.

Confession time: monster meat was unbelievably delicious. One time, just out of curiosity, I'd gone out of my way to cut up and cook a monster I'd killed. When I ate it, I could have sworn I was eating the highest-grade wagyu because it tasted out-of-this-world amazing. I was no professional butcher, so I'd made a mess of the process, especially draining the blood, but that didn't make it taste any less incredible.

According to Lefi, the magic that flowed through monster bodies was what made the meat taste so good, and just about everyone in this world knew that monster meat was way better than regular animal meat. Learning that little tidbit about life here had gotten me to start keeping a bunch of different monster corpses in my Inventory. I didn't have a mountain's worth of them like what Lefi would bring back, especially that one from the first day she went hunting, but all in all, I'd have a decent-sized pile if I dumped them all out. Time was frozen inside Inventory too, so I didn't have to worry about it going bad.

"All right, Rir, ready to head out? I don't really know this area, so you'll have to be my tour gui— Oh? You're gonna let me ride on your back?"

With his body low to the ground, he growled affirmatively.

“Ha ha! I’ll take you up on your offer, then.”

Encouraged by Rir, I jumped up and straddled his huge back. He then pushed his legs up to stand tall again. *Wow, I’m really high up.*

“Okay, all set. Lead the waAAY?!”

At my signal, he immediately started to gallop. The air pressure was so strong that I thought I was gonna get thrown off his back. It spooked me enough that I grabbed his fur as tightly as I could and squeezed my legs super hard against his torso.

“Ha ha ha ha! This is amazing, Rir!” I shouted. Rir’s speed was insane. Making use of that speed, the two of us went deeper into the woods.

Today, I was gonna go out hunting with Rir. I hadn’t gone on too many hunts lately because I already had plenty of DP rolling in consistently, but I was still feeling the pain of having spent as much as I did on Flight. I needed to replenish my digital wallet as soon as demonly possible. Plus, Rir and I hadn’t had a whole lot of bonding time, so I was determined to spend the day having fun with him.

Once we were out of the cave, we started heading east. The area we lived in was pretty massive, which made it easy to divide it up into sections based on which direction they were from the cave. In the north was Lefi’s old domain, and the south had all the places I’d added to the dungeon’s territory during my expansion efforts.

Ignoring the northern region since nothing lived there, the monsters in the south were a joke compared to the ones in the east and west. The fact that someone like me, who had effectively zero fighting and strategy knowledge, had no problem beating them was all the proof of that. The eastern region was average, more or less; the monsters there weren’t overly strong, but they weren’t super weak either. That made them perfect for my combat training, which was why I went east most of the time. A strong enemy would show up every now and then, which always made things interesting, but I’d gotten out alive every time, obviously.

As for the west, it was easily the most dangerous region. So many powerful monsters lived in the west that a literal child could tell that the place was a death trap just by looking at it. Even the weaker monsters were still twice as strong as the ones in the east. I *never* went west if I didn't have Lefi with me.

Whenever I wanted to increase my DP, I usually just went south, but that plan had hit a bit of a snag. The ecosystem there was sorta-kinda collapsing because it had been overhunted. Who could have caused such a thing? Mostly me and Rir. Lefi helped a little too. We may or may not have done so much hunting there that the few monsters we hadn't killed ended up migrating even farther south out of fear. Basically, little by little, they'd been forced to change their habitats because of us.

Since the monsters had moved outside the dungeon's territory, my DP income had gone down. And after all that time and energy I spent on expansion... Anyway, I'd decided that we were done hunting in the south until it went back to normal, which was why Rir and I were headed east.

It's a blessing in disguise, I guess. I hadn't scoped out the area yet, so now was as good a time as any to check it out. Would make it easier to plan my future expansion efforts in this direction.

"Ooh, a Horned Tiger."

A tiger with a horn growing out of its forehead like a unicorn, hence the name "Horned Tiger." Because it knew Rir was nearby, it gave a low, threatening growl; the thing was clearly on its guard. It may have looked mean as shit, but it was slower than a snail and its attacks were really weak. Definitely not a strong monster in my opinion.

The Venomous Rabbit was way more vicious than this tiger. It was the same size and had the same amount of HP as a regular rabbit, but it was insanely quick and agile. By the time you realized you'd lost sight of it, it was already biting down on you with its deadly, venomous fangs.

The venom was uber nasty too. I'd only ever seen a Venomous Rabbit bite something once, but it only took like ten seconds for the spot that got bit to turn some gross colors. Twenty seconds after that, the monster was dead. That monster had been more than ten times the rabbit's size, mind you. In my

humble opinion, the monsters you didn't expect to be strong, like the Venomous Rabbit, were a lot worse to deal with than blatantly powerful ones.

Eh, whatever. DP is DP, so let's make some money off this tiger, I thought, and immediately descended from the sky. Just before I crashed into the tiger, I used both hands to swing my sword straight down on its head. The beast was so focused on Rir that it never even noticed me, not even at the end. Pieces of flesh splattered everywhere with raw, wet sounds as what remained of its body slowly sank to the ground and stopped moving.

And that was our current strategy, though maybe "strategy" was too fancy to describe what we were doing. The gist of it was that Rir would act as a decoy and attract the enemy's attention on the ground, while I activated my Stealth ability and waited up in the air. Once I found an opening to attack, I'd swoop down as fast as I could and make my move, that move being a vicious, messy beheading. And on the off chance an enemy noticed me, Rir would use his Morphing Chains ability to stop them in their tracks so that we didn't have to change up our plan on the fly. All in all, our approach was working extremely well. RIP to our enemies, though. Poor guys died some gnarly deaths.

The original plan didn't actually involve any aerial charges like that; I was just supposed to sneak up on the enemy from the sky. That clearly didn't happen, but only because I came up with the idea while I was riding Rir. He was running so fast that I felt like I was in a race car, which got me all hopped up on adrenaline and made my brain not work right. Instead of following the plan, I had this badass idea of stopping in midair right in front of the enemy, chopping its head off, and making a smooth landing. I knew I was still nowhere near as good at flying as Lefi, but my adrenaline brain had me convinced that I could pull it off. Thanks to that, when it was time to attack, I jumped off of Rir and flew way up high to try to turn myself into some sort of high-altitude missile.

Surprising absolutely no one, I completely bombed it by not being able to control my descent. I couldn't get myself to slow down even a little bit, so I ended up crashing straight into the monster and blowing it to smithereens. Rir looked like he was bugging out when that happened, which was honestly pretty funny, but my messed-up sense of humor aside, it had me bugging out too. Fortunately, though, a collision like that turned out to be a whole lot of nothing

for my demon lord body. I'd felt the shock of slamming so hard into the ground that it left a crater, yet it didn't put so much as a scratch on me. My HP didn't even go down because of it.

After that first incident, any concept of caution, slowing down, taking it easy, and all that jazz completely disappeared from my mind. Now, I wholeheartedly trusted my body to keep me alive. I was living my best life as a lean, mean, ballistic demon-missile machine. It was a total muscles-for-brains battle strategy, relying entirely on my physical abilities and not caring about whether I'd get hurt, but I was living up to the demon stereotype, and that was great. Right hand to your god of choice, I was having a freaking blast.

My attitude made sense because I loved thrill rides at amusement parks on Earth. The scarier, the better. I even had the million-DP idea of turning *myself* into a thrill ride. The novelty of riding a demon and the rush of dive-bombing would definitely attract people—and not-people too—from all over. *Folks, I'm open for business!* But not really.

“Well, shit. It broke.”

I stared at the hilt in my hand. It was the only thing left of my sword after I shook off the dust, blood, and guts stuck to both it and me. That last attack was the proverbial straw that shattered the blade, and now it was totally useless.

“Hmm... What should I do about a weapon?”

While I walked around adding these new areas to the dungeon's territory, I racked my brain over the issue. Using the Magical Pistol *was* an option, but it took a while to reload. It was still my trump card, so I did keep it on me, but I still needed a main weapon. Swords were definitely out of the question now that I knew for sure I wasn't cut out for them. I'd already destroyed so many, and no matter how much I used them, I just couldn't get the hang of it.

I couldn't deny the fact that I was a complete amateur, but it honestly seemed like they were just incompatible with a demon lord's physical capabilities. In short, swords were too fragile to handle my demonic power output. They were a lot harder to use than I thought they'd be.

I wish I had something else I could use as a weapon... Well, I guess a steel bar'll work for now. So I bought one from the DP Catalog. I couldn't tell you why

it was in the Weapons category, but maybe it would be more effective since my battle “strategy” until now was just to use the sword as a blunt-force weapon since I couldn’t use it any other way.

The rebar was only a temporary measure, but it was still better than nothing. Holding it tightly in my hand, I mounted Rir. Adorable, loyal Rir, who looked so sympathetic and hurt every time I crashed into the ground on our hunts. Off we went in search of our next prey.



“Goddamn, dude! That almost got me!”

A dangerous-looking liquid had just whizzed past me, coming within a millimeter of my cheek. It missed, but it ended up landing on a huge tree growing nearby. As soon as it hit, the ooze started burning its way through the bark. The trunk sizzled as it disintegrated, and the tree fell to the ground with a terrible cracking noise. *Son of a... That would’ve melted my face off if it hit me...*

In case it wasn’t obvious, Rir and I were running for our lives right now. There was a massive colony of ants chasing us, each ant bigger than a medium-sized dog. The group was too big to count; I couldn’t even see the ground there were so many of them. They weren’t letting up even a little bit, and neither were their winged brethren, who were flying after us as well. The dry, rasping sound of the wings beating combined with the immense swarm made my skin crawl, no pun intended.

At first, there had only been a few. They weren’t particularly strong, so with the surprisingly easy-to-use rebar, I went around destroying them like I would any other monsters of their level. Just when I was about to move on to my next target, out of nowhere, a few more of the damned things showed up. The only thought in my mind was a casual, *Oh, there were more?* so I made quick work of those ones too.

That was where things got bad. The ants didn’t stop showing up even after the second round. They just kept coming, and there were more of them every time. Whenever I killed one, even more would take its place, and it never ended. By the time I caught my breath and took stock of the situation, the horde had turned into an unstoppable legion.

The craziest thing about them was their speed. Even though he was running as fast as he possibly could, Rir, with me on his back, still couldn't shake them off. He was definitely stronger than most creatures, and he had the stamina to match, but that was a given for a fenrir. Most monsters couldn't hold a candle to a fenrir—which was why the fact that these freaking ants were keeping up with him was absolutely insane.

"H-Hey, Rir! I really think I should get off!"

"Grrr!"

I interpreted his growl as "Absolutely not!" which, yeah, I didn't blame him. He could run way faster than I could fly, and since there were flying ants in the group, they would have surrounded me right away. The only place I would have gone was into their guts after they feasted on my flesh. Damn, now I had goosebumps visualizing that.

"O-Okay! Then... Then I'll get ready to fight!"

Determined not to be more of a burden, I turned around on Rir's back to face the angry mob. I felt like an actor in one of those cowboy movies, where they'd be riding a galloping horse backward but then get flung off with a quick attack from an enemy. I was a demon lord, though, so I was strong enough to stop myself from doing that. I had to be.

All I had to do now was figure out what the hell to do. I'd already used up all the rounds in my Magic Pistol, and given the situation, I didn't have time to mess with the reload delay. If the steel rod could extend like a magic staff I could fight them no problemo, but unfortunately for me, it was just a normal steel rod with no special functions. That meant that magic was gonna be our only way out.

Yeah. Yeah, okay. I'll use magic. That'll do the trick. I hadn't used it in real combat yet, but it would be fine. Probably. Grandma always told me that everything would work out as long as I tried hard and believed in myself. *I know, I don't have a grandma here, yada yada yada...*

Time to put my half-baked plan into action. I immediately began working my magic, a certain kind I'd been practicing a lot recently, and voila, three giant dragons made out of water. They took on the form of Chinese dragons with

long, snakelike bodies. That's right, it was the official debut of the water magic I mentioned a while ago.

Okay, so I could still only make hot water, but all that mattered was that the dragons existed and I was gonna have them do their jobs. They were proof that my imaginative powers had increased a level. *Huh... Kind of a piss-off now that I'm thinking about how far I still have to go.*

"Take them out!"

I manipulated my water dragons, ramming them directly into the army of ants. The dragons burst through the middle of the pack like lightning strikes, then swallowed as many of the buggers as they could with their water jaws.

The effects of the magic were simple. First, the hot-water dragons would charge into the enemies to capture them inside their water bodies. Then, they would immediately coil themselves into water prisons so that whatever was trapped inside couldn't escape. There was a massively strong current inside the prisons too, essentially making them lethal water blades. To make things worse for the enemies, I found that using earth magic to toss some sand in there created an even more abrasive environment.

Once something was caught inside one of the water dragons, it would get chopped up into tiny little pieces. If by some miracle an enemy avoided that particular fate, they still had no way to escape because of the current, so they'd end up drowning. Either way, anything in there was so dead.

By the way, the water didn't need to take on the form of a dragon. It technically didn't need to take on *any* form, I just thought it'd be cooler if it looked like a dragon.

I needed to remind myself to show Lefi my new magic. She told me she'd assess any new techniques I discovered, and I was pretty sure the artistic and romantic elements I put into them would get me a perfect score.

While I was busy fantasizing about the presentation I was going to give Lefi, my magic manifested itself exactly how I'd planned. The ants inside the water dragons were being dismembered right before my eyes.

"Bah ha ha ha! How d'ya like them apples, you dirty ants?! W-Wait. Wait, my

bad. Wait! C'mon! I said I was sorry!"

The ants that had managed to avoid the water dragons were counterattacking, shooting balls of fiery acid our way. And I, a dumbass, started apologizing to them because of it. "B-Bastards! You're just a bunch of worthless ants! Don't think you have the upper hand now!" I immediately formed more hot-water dragons and had them attack.

This is very, very bad.

I churned out as much magic as I could to annihilate the nasty insects, but I was still seething. The magic was working, there were just too damn many of them. I was afraid my MP would run out before I could exterminate them all.

Even worse, I didn't have any other magical options. I'd been so focused on practicing using the water magic—particularly on perfecting the dragons—that them not being enough left me S.O.L. on the magic front.

Dammit, I really should've practiced the other kinds of magic. Ugh, shoulda, coulda, woulda, world without end, amen.

I didn't have time to bitch. For now, I'd try to at least stall them. I opened Inventory right away and started pulling out the monster corpses I'd been hoarding. It sucked to waste them like this, but I had to try *something*, so I started chucking them at the oncoming ants.

"Eat this!"

Initially, the ants had dodged the so-called obstacles I'd been throwing at them. Once they realized that it was fresh meat I was flinging at them, though, they changed their minds. Instead of keeping up the chase, they started swarming around the carcasses and absolutely chowing down.

What... What on not-earth? I was only trying to buy us some time, so this was unexpected.

"G-Good! All according to plan! Let's get out of here, Rir!"

I could feel Rir giving me an "Oh yeah? That's *really* what you planned?" look, but he kept on running until we were far away from that place.

Once I couldn't see the damn ants anymore, I let out a sigh of relief.

"Ughhh... I'm exhausted. You must be drained too, Rir. Thanks for today. Let's call it here."

"Grrr?"

"Oh, right, if you could drop me off at the dungeon, that'd be great. You should just stay the night too at this point. But jeez, man. There were so many of those stupid things. I feel like I'm definitely going to be traumatized from that."

"Grr."

"Yeah, you're right. There might have been an anthill nearby."

One time, back when I lived on Earth, I saw something on TV about an anthill that was taller than a person. Based on the size of the fuckers that had been chasing us, I wouldn't be surprised if their nest was as big as a mountain. I missed my chance to add that area to the dungeon's territory because, you know, I was hellbent on not dying. But it would have been really nice to have that as part of my DP income stream. Too bad I had no plans on going there ever again.

It wasn't like I hated bugs or anything, that had just been so obscenely creepy that it almost *did* make me hate them. I was real close to making "Death to all insects" my new personal motto. Seriously, that was some Oklahoma Jones-level shenanigans back there. Huge props to the guy for having the mental strength to not let stuff like that break him.

"Anyway..."

Rocking back and forth while still sitting on Rir's back, I kept thinking about how I didn't have a whole lot of weapons. So far, my demon lord body had carried me through everything, the good and the bad, but that wasn't gonna work against huge numbers of enemies, just like it didn't today. I hated being so helpless. Magic was perfectly fine to learn, it just couldn't be the only thing I focused on. I needed to get myself some more physical offensive measures to go along with my magic. I had to conduct a thorough investigation into which weapons would work best for me, and I had to do it soon.

Oh, right, here was Lefi's assessment when I showed her the hot-water dragons sometime later:

"Yuki, is it quite necessary for the water to take on a dragon-like form?"

"No, not really. Why?"

"Hmm... How might I state this politely...? You are a man who seems to be...at the mercy of his whims, perhaps?"

I certainly couldn't refute that.



I needed a weapon. Badly. I hadn't stopped thinking about that since I first figured it out during my last hunt with Rir. Until then, for no particular reason—really just because I was in another world—I'd been using a sword. But as much as I hated to say it, swords and I were not meant to be. I needed a weapon suitable for the demon lord I'd become, and so I was scrolling through the DP Catalog, hoping to find something good.

"Hmm..."

Sitting cross-legged on the throne like I always did, I mulled over the issue. As expected, regular double-edged swords were the most common weapons in the Catalog, probably because they were the most traditional of all the weapons in this world. All the ones I'd used so far had been cheap, so a more expensive one might perform better, but I couldn't justify wasting time and energy on testing each one. Not right now, anyway.

Besides swords, the Catalog also had spears, bows, and katanas. I got the feeling that I wouldn't be able to use these weapons very well either. Just like how the swords didn't work out, I doubted they'd be compatible with my demon lord body. Chances were that they were also too fragile.

The steel wires and scythes seemed neat. They looked so sleek and powerful, like the kinds of weapons teenage boys dreamed about. I had an issue with those too, though it was less about compatibility and more about whether I could even use them properly.

Despite my high Dexterity, it seemed irrelevant to my skill—or lack thereof—

with weapons. In comparison, the rebar was easy to use, so I liked it. I mean, all I had to do was swing it around like a bat and *bam*, enemies went down for the count. I actually wouldn't mind a main weapon that did that. Something that easy to use that let me just bulldoze my way through monsters sounded right up my alley. *A cudgel, maybe? Mm-hmm, that's going on the list.*

But wait, how would a demon lord look waving a cudgel around? If I couldn't find anything else that fit the bill, a cudgel would work. I knew I was asking for the moon, but I wanted something that really fit the demon lord vibe—the kind of weapon the last boss in an RPG would use. Wait, what did final bosses use again? *Damn, I think they use swords.*

Hold on, though. Most endgame bosses didn't have human forms. Even if they did, they transformed into their monster form before the fight started. Did that mean I could learn an ability that would transform me into a monster too? That had to be a thing, right? It sounded kinda fun, shape-shifting into some atrocious fiend and roaring like a beast.

Damn, dude, get it together. I'd gone way off on a tangent. I needed to concentrate on the actual issue at hand. The best kind of weapon for me had to be something that could kill an enemy in one shot, something so heavy that I needed a ton of brute strength to use it. I'd use Earth's Creature Hunter game series as a point of reference. I wasn't looking for Dual Blades or Sword-and-Shield-type weapons. I wanted something that fell in the Greatsword or Hammer categories.

A greatsword, eh? That'll work. I swiped on the DP Catalog. My Swordsmanship ability should have meant that I could use one, and I wanted it to be heavier and more powerful than the swords and rebar I'd used so far. Most important of all, though, was the coolness factor. Coolness was crucial for me because it helped me stay motivated. More often than not, training was a monotonous pain in the ass, so if something small but vital like coolness didn't exist, I'd have nothing to psych myself up with. And forget about doing drills for a long period of time with a boring weapon. Therefore, I had a perfectly valid reason to prioritize the importance of "cool." It totally wasn't because I liked kid stuff. Nope, not at all.

"Yes! That's it!"

I tapped on the greatsword I wanted and bought it. As soon as it appeared, I gripped the hilt. This was one of the few greatswords within my budget, but jeez, it was still pretty damn expensive.

“Oh ho, and what have we here? Have you grown so tired of your silly sword games that you now seek a new weapon?”

Lefi called out to me when she noticed what I was up to. She was grinning smugly after beating Iluna at Othello. The only reason she had even asked Iluna to play was that she hadn't won a single match against me; she was just using the poor girl to pad her record.

“You better watch your back, Lefi. I'll strip the scales off your hide with my ‘silly sword games’ one of these days, and I'm talking in your dragon form.”

“Oh, my scales which surpass the hardness of the most powerful iron and steel? I shall look forward to it, then.”

The arrogant smirk on her face and the unconcerned tone of her voice pissed me off. But I didn't have time for her crap, so I forced myself to calm down. I needed to test the greatsword I was holding, which I did by swinging it.

...It's too light.

Dammit, that wasn't gonna fly. It had to be way heavier. Sure, it had more weight than the rebar, but personally, I wanted something that would make my arms *work* to handle it. I wanted something heavy enough to cut through rock. Of course, what I was hoping for now would have been impossible to find or even hold if I'd gotten it back on Earth, but I wasn't a human anymore. My demon lord body was more than strong enough to wield a weapon heavier than this like it was a pool noodle.

Also, not to nitpick even more, but the blade itself was too...thin? What I imagined was a greatsword from that game series I mentioned earlier—I wanted a *thick, wide* blade. If I had to compare this to greatswords that existed on Earth, I'd say it was closer to a Zweihänder or a claymore. I just knew that if I ever tried to cut through a boulder with this, the blade would snap. In fact, I guaranteed it.

I was pretty sure this greatsword was made specifically for humans to use.

Greatswords were heavy and difficult to maneuver by nature, but this one in particular looked like it had been adapted for weaker species like humans. It tried to stay big like a normal greatsword while reducing its weight, which was definitely a clever idea for a redesign, it was just wasted on me. What I needed was for it to do the opposite.

The bad news didn't end there either. All the greatswords that were higher quality than this one were exponentially higher quality, which meant they were exponentially more expensive as well. I couldn't afford any of them after splurging on the Flight ability a while back. And there was really no point in buying a cheaper one.

Wait a sec... I remembered seeing something in the DP Catalog that could come in handy at a time like this, so I opened it back up and started scrolling through all of the categories. After looking for a bit, I found the ability I'd been looking for: Weapon Enhancement.

According to the description, the user had to prepare the materials necessary for the upgrade they were after. Then, with those materials in hand, they had to imagine what kind of weapon they wanted their existing one to become. Keeping that thought in their mind, if they activated the Enhancement ability while putting magic into the weapon, those materials would transform the weapon into what they desired.

The quality of the materials, the strength of the user's imagination, and the amount of magic all factored into the quality of the final product. In other words, the better the materials, the clearer the mental image, and the stronger the magic, the more enhanced the weapon would get. Also, it sounded like it was possible to create high-quality weapons even without proper materials and magic if the Enhancement ability leveled up enough.

That's right. If you don't have the perfect weapon, just make it yourself. So I'd make my own. Couldn't hurt turning myself into a well-rounded, creative demon lord. Excellent. This could indicate the next evolution of demon lords. No, actually, I might have just opened up a whole new world for demon lords.

Fortunately for me, the DP Catalog was selling all the materials I needed for Weapon Enhancement. My power of imagination was extra strong thanks to my

recent focus on fantasizing—er, mental training involving the hot-water dragons, so I had that part down pat. And the cherry on top was Lefi's seal of approval regarding my way-above-average magical energy. If I added all that up, it meant I could expect something good out of the weapon I wanted to create.

Confession time. When I found Weapon Enhancement, another ability had also caught my eye: Sorcerer's Grant. Yup, the ability specifically differentiated sorcery from magic. According to Lefi, magic was based on imagination, whereas sorcery was based on theory. Basically, the difference between the two was instinct versus, like, book smarts.

The way this ability worked was that it "granted" a sorcerous circuit to whatever object the user wanted to transform into a magical tool. At level 1, only two types of circuits could be conferred: Effective Range Increase: Small and Magical Energy Reduction: Small. The number of circuits that could be granted went up along with the ability's level. Also, if an object was outside the user's skill level, as long as the user themselves knew the circuit, they could still grant it. I seriously wanted to learn this ability soon.

The number of circuits that could be bestowed on an object and the effects of the circuits depended on the object's size, shape, and quality. For example, if something was made from a substance that already contained magic like mythrill, it would be much easier to increase the number of circuits because the flow of magic would be naturally unobstructed. The effect of the circuit would be much stronger in that kind of situation too, of course. On the other hand, if the object was made of normal iron, the number of potential circuits and the amount of power they gave would go down.

I fully intended to go all out in learning and using my magic whenever and wherever, so I'd love it if my physical weapons could function as assistants to my magic. A level 1 circuit might not seem like a big deal on the surface, but I'd always thought that even the smallest things could have the biggest impact. Eventually, I wanted to get good enough that I could make cool endgame-type RPG weapons, the ones with all kinds of special effects included. My mind racing with all kinds of ideas, I immediately bought the Ability Scrolls for both abilities and obtained them through the usual process.

Name: Yuki

Race: Archdemon

Class: Demon Lord

Level: 32

HP: 2,511 / 2,511

MP: 7,180 / 7,180

Strength: 713

Stamina: 744

Agility: 652

Magic: 992

Dexterity: 1,310

Luck: 72

Ability Points: 3

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot, Flight

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 7, Unarmed Combat 4, Elemental Magic 4, Stealth 5, Scout 4, Swordsmanship 2, Weapon Enhancement 1, Sorcerer's Grant 1

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World, The Supreme Dragon's Owner

Dungeon Points (DP): 32,041

Sweet, abilities acquired. I'd leveled up quite a bit too, based on that 32 there. And I was sorta happy about my Luck going up, even if it wasn't by much. Knowing that it wasn't fixed was a huge relief. Not too long ago, I'd used up most of my Ability Points to level up Analysis again, so I didn't have that many now. I couldn't stress how useful Analysis had been to me, and because of that, I planned on using every Ability Point I could until I had the ability maxed out.

My goal was to be able to see Lefi's stats.

Wait, what? When did I get another title...?

The Supreme Dragon's Owner: A fearless being who domesticated the dragon that established dominion over the world.

Well, okay, I *had* gradually tamed her with sweet treats like what you'd do with a pet back on Earth. If Lefi found out about this, her head would probably explode from rage. I could already hear her going, "How dare you treat me like I am a pet?! Your impudence knows no bounds, Yuki!"

Oh, right, speaking of my titles, Lefi didn't seem to care at all that I was "The Demon Lord from Another World." I knew for a fact that she could see it too, so I'd tried to test her once by declaring, "You know, I'm not from this world." All I got out of her was a measly "Indeed," but I guess I shouldn't have been surprised by her indifference.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't have some lingering attachment to my life on Earth. Honestly, though, I found myself caring less and less because my time there just felt like the distant past. Plus, my life as a demon lord was insanely fun. My world was wherever I existed. That would never change even if the environment itself did.

Okay, enough about my past life, it was time to try out my new abilities. I decided to start with a small experiment to test the process, so I bought a fist-sized iron ingot from the Catalog. *I'm honestly still really baffled by all the random stuff in here.*

"Hm? It seems Yuki is up to something strange once again."

"Yukiki, are you gonna show me another magic trick?"

Lefi walked over to me alongside Iluna, who was still pouting because she'd lost at Othello.

"Not exactly a 'trick,' but something like it, maybe? Also, Lefi, could you stop being so freaking mean? I don't do weird stuff, okay? Damn." I just enjoyed

testing whether I could do things or not. Nothing weird about that. “Although I guess what I’m about to do isn’t going to be particularly interesting.”

After saying that, I smiled awkwardly at the two girls—Illuna, who was just straight-up staring at me, and Lefi, who couldn’t stop herself from being curious no matter how much she said she wasn’t. Then, I turned back to the ingot. I wanted to try making a short dagger, so I imagined a stainless-steel knife with a metal handle like what military guys might use.

The easiest thing for me to think of was the knife I’d always used in close combat in an FPS game I used to play. Once I had a picture of it clear in my head, I started streaming my magic into the ingot. I used my Demon Eyes to confirm enough magic had made its way into the ingot, then activated the Weapon Enhancement ability. When I did, the chunk of iron morphed into a soft, pliable shape before it started squirming almost like it was alive. It kept up its rapid changes, working to change into its solid final form. Watching it actually kinda grossed me out.

“Whoa. I can’t believe that worked.”

The final product was a knife that looked exactly like the image in my head. The blade was twelve centimeters long and fairly wide. Because the whole thing was made of iron, the handle itself was really angular and jagged. It would probably be a good idea to wrap a rope or something around it to make it safer and easier to hold.

Wanting to test the knife, I opened Inventory and took out some monster flesh. The blade sliced clean through like it was cutting butter. For something that wasn’t cast or forged, it was pretty damn sharp. I couldn’t even begin to figure out how that was possible. I mean, how in the world did magic exert its influence directly over a natural element like the iron I’d just used?

The Demon Lord’s Dagger: An iron dagger created by Demon Lord Yuki. No engraving. Quality: C+.

Because I’d leveled Analysis up, it now went as far as showing me the level of quality for a product. C+ was a decent rating; it was about the same as buying

the ten-bucks-more-expensive version of something you bought all the time. You know what, forget that. That example didn't really make a ton of sense.

Anyway, my experiment was a success, and on the first try too. According to the ability's explanation, I apparently owed a lot of that to my pointlessly high Dexterity—the higher the stat, the higher the quality of the final product. At long last, my useless Dexterity had a purpose. That was how I felt, anyway. *Folks, if you wanna be a creative demon lord, up your Dexterity or quit. That's the way the cookie crumbles.*

"Fascinating. That technique is one element of the mountain people's smithing magic. And so, you have created your own weapon. I commend you, Yuki."

Lefi closely scrutinized the knife I'd made.

"Yukiki, you're good at cooking, and now you can make stuff like that too! You're so smart! Just like a mama!"

I couldn't help but wonder if it was okay for Iluna's assessment to make me happy.

"That was just the start. Now, it's time to see what I can *really* do."

I opened up the DP Catalog again and this time I bought ten kilos of iron ingots. I wanted to buy mythril ingots, but they were way over my budget. I had the knack of the process now, so I'd give my next weapon a double-edged blade, and make it bigger— *Stop*. Didn't the Sorcerer's Grant ability rely on the object's shape too? I needed to take that into account when I enhanced the knife.

I was pretty sure water magic would become my main magic in the near future, so maybe I should make something with a more fluid form? To match water's flow and all that. A rounded silhouette would be a good way to give it the impression of a water droplet...

All those unnecessary thoughts made it turn out weird.

I could only stare in silence at the monstrosity I'd created. A hilt made of iron. A blade—if you could really call it that—that was smooth and fluid like water. Whatever this thing was, it had a vaguely bluish tint to it, which made it look

like some sort of fantasy crap. But it was supposed to be made of iron...

“Woow! It’s Shii!”

I hated that she was right. The “upgrade” totally made it look like a slime—at least when it came to the part that wasn’t the hilt. You know, the part that I refused to call a blade.

“Well... Yuki, what is this?”

“...A weapon.”

“Oh, is that the case? Then pray enlighten me on its usage.”

“Uhhh... Okay, so you grip the handle like this, right? Then you use the flowing part jutting from the handle to bash enemies. And that’s how it works.”

“Indeed? It seems quite powerful.”

Is she serious? I couldn’t tell. Setting that aside for now, I sure was glad I hadn’t tried that with the mythril ingots. If I’d failed this hard with the hella expensive mythril, it would have taken me days to recover from the financial and mental blows.

“I-It’s fine. Onward and upward.”

Once again, I went to buy more iron— *No, wait, wait. I have* that. Instead of the DP Catalog, I opened Inventory and I pulled out a hornlike item that was black and sharp at the end. This horn had come from a monster that was a lot like a rhinoceros beetle, except it had been the size of a car. The enormous beetle monster had crushed a tree with its horn, so I’d broken it off after I killed it. That was all I’d taken from it; I figured it might come in handy someday.

Holding the horn in my hands now, I gave it a thorough inspection. It was fairly large, heavy, and, like I said, hard enough to topple massive trees. It was perfect as a material for my dream greatsword. I’d been using iron because my brain defaulted to that as a source component for a weapon, but the description never actually said that there were any restrictions. In my mind, that meant that this could work just as well. There was a good chance it would.

All right, time to focus. Focus. The second time I tried this, I’d thought of too many random things. This time, I’d keep it simple. I wouldn’t factor in whether

it could handle magic. What I wanted was heft and sharpness—just those two things. As for the shape, I'd go even more basic. A hilt and a double-edged blade were all I needed.

As I solidified the image in my mind, I pushed my magic through the material. Two-thirds of my MP got sucked up real quick, which was probably because of the high quality of the horn. I continued to concentrate, and when I felt that most of my magic had been absorbed, I activated the Enhancement ability.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see a sneaky grin on Lefi's face as she scooted right up next to me. She whispered something into my ear that I had trouble making out, but it sounded like..."flower"?

"Holy guacamole! What even is this?!"

The weapon was complete. What lay before me had a hilt, a guard, and beyond that...beyond that bloomed a flower.

The Demon Lord's Greatsword: A beautiful greatsword with a blossom at its point created by Demon Lord Yuki. No engraving. Quality: B+.

The blade itself resembled a flower stem, and there was a flower blooming at its tip. It literally looked like something out of a fairy tale. This must have happened because I thought of a flower toward the end of the process! Was that why it ended up shaped like this? And why was it such high quality?!

"You— This— Son of a *bitch*, Lefi! Look what you made me do!"

And...I couldn't try again. As it turned out, I couldn't use the Enhancement ability on the same object twice. Not to mention that my MP was completely shot, so it was impossible to do anything more anyway. I didn't even have another horn on me. I could go hunting again, but that was the only time I'd ever seen that monstrously huge beetle, so searching for another would probably take forever. In other words, this flower blade ended up being the highest-grade weapon I could make.

"Pfft. Ahem. Wh-What a lovely flower. I-I find it to be quite an elegant

weapon.”

“Lefi, you...! I only had the one horn!”

“Wh-Why not make use of it before you judge it? I am certain you can slaughter many a monster with it!”

At that point, Lefi stopped being able to contain herself and burst out laughing. She howled so hard that she collapsed, writhing hysterically on the ground.

“Fuck! You’re just as childish on the inside as you are on the outside! And what’s with you and flowers, you mini psycho?! You pulled that flower shit when you taught me how to use magic, and you did it again just now! You just like flowers, don’t you, you little asshole?! You like sweets and you like flowers! Seems to me that Miss Conqueror of Dragonkind ain’t nothing more than a little girl!”

“A-And what is so objectionable about any of that?! Nothing, I tell you! Nothing! My hobbies are of no concern to you!”

“Of course they aren’t! I literally just used them to insult you! They’re the exact opposite of what an evil hag like you should like!”

“Gaaahhh!!! You have crossed the line, Yuki! If that is what you desire, then that is what you shall get! It is time I showed you what it truly means to challenge the Supreme Dragon!”

“‘Supreme Dragon’ this, ‘Supreme Dragon’ that! I’m so tired of hearing that garbage! Stop acting like you’re special! And you’re not a Supreme Dragon! You’re a Moronic Dragon!”

“Again with your insolence! Prepare yourself, Yuki, for you will understand why the term ‘hell’ exists! I shall teach you its meaning in excruciating detail!”

Instead of watching me and Lefi fight, Iluna and Shii ran behind the throne. “Oh no, they’re doing it again. Come on, Shii, let’s play!” she said, her voice echoing throughout the room.

In the end, as much as it pissed me off to admit, Lefi was right that the flower blade wasn’t half bad. It even became my main weapon for a while. I still

needed to get good materials ASAP, though.

Side Story 1: A Man Named Yuki

What a strange man, Lefi thought as she watched the scene before her unfold.

“Yukiki, how come Sita was okay even though she fell from the flying boat in the sky?”

“Ummm, weeeell...I got it. Because her pendant held a strange and powerful magic, that’s why.”

Yuki, the demon lord, was telling a completely age-inappropriate and unnecessarily exciting tale to the dungeon’s most recent resident, the young Iluna. It irritated Lefi to find herself caught up in the drama, especially because she’d never heard it herself—an unusual occurrence for someone who’d lived as long as she had.

It perturbed her that he could create profoundly mysterious items and that he held knowledge she didn’t. But there were also moments when he didn’t know things he should have. There were so many inconsistencies about him that she couldn’t help but think once again about how strange he was. She speculated that perhaps that kind of behavior was inevitable for someone so recently reborn as a demon and summoned by his dungeon to become its lord, and yet...

He is another breed entirely compared to other demon lords.

It had nothing to do with his origins or background and everything to do with the aura he emitted. She had trouble describing it in exact terms; the best she could think of was that he had an indescribable charm that strongly attracted others. He could make others feel at ease, comforted in his presence. And that in itself felt like a kind of magic to her.

I am certain Iluna understands this intuitively as well.

It was also possible that Yuki’s personality evoked these mysterious feelings in Lefi. He didn’t hide any of his emotions, the good or the bad. He was always honest and innocent in ways she wasn’t used to. Then there was his responsible

side, which contrasted sharply with his occasional absentmindedness. Regardless of what drew her to him, she was certain that he was vastly different from others, that there was something special about him.

The tedium of the past few centuries has worn me down.

During the age of strife, Lefi had only engaged in fighting those foolish enough to challenge her as a means to while away the time. After the battles had been won, when she had finally taken stock of the world around her, she learned that she had already obtained the title “Supreme Dragon.” After that, fear of the Supreme Dragon, the strongest member of the strongest race, became so widespread that none would dare provoke her again. Even her own people, the dragons, would shrink away. The only ones that remained were those who kneeled before her.

But then this man came along. At first, he had been unmistakably overwhelmed by the difference in their power, but it hadn’t taken him long to drop his guard. It wasn’t long before he became so comfortable with her that he grew impudent. Lefi often quarreled with him, yet that in itself was a new experience for her. Before he came along, she’d never argued with others.

Good grief... I still do not know if he is courageous or merely fearless.

He was the only one who acknowledged her as Lefisios the individual and not Lefisios the Supreme Dragon. That was a refreshing change of pace for her—and also incredibly comforting, which was another new emotion for her.

I want to bask in this wonderful space. I know not how long our life together will last, but I pray for as much time as can be given...

Chapter 3: Contact

I could hear Iluna's throat working as she sucked my blood. I could hear her panting as well. Her cute, seductive sighs were practically melting my brain. I could feel her high body temperature lighting my skin on fire through our clothes, and she gave off a sweet scent that I never wanted to stop smelling.

"Mmm... That was yummy. Thank you, Yukiki!"

Having gotten her fill of my blood, Iluna smiled at me and wiped her mouth. Her bloodstained lips made her look like a tantalizing young imp.

"Uh...yeah, sure. No problem."

Feeling tired, I couldn't quite look her in the eye as I replied. These bloodsucking sessions were torture for me every single time, but not because I hated them. No, it was actually because they made me happy. Too happy. Each one ground down my patience and willpower little by little. Iluna was a *damn* scary little girl to have a committed non-pedo questioning his sanity like this!

"I'm so lucky that you let me drink your tasty blood, Yukiki," she told me while I shuddered in revulsion at my own thoughts. She sounded like a mature young lady rather than the little girl she actually was. Seemed like she was trying to act older than she actually was.

"What? Hang on, does blood taste different depending on who it's from?"

"Yup! Lots different!" she declared as she hopped up from her curled position on my lap. What a freaking cutie. "Okay, so, Yukiki, your blood is super easy to drink, and it tastes so good that I could drink it forever! And then, and then, it feels like you're going inside me, like you're a part of me. So it makes me feel really warm and happy!"

"O-Oh, I see... Well... I guess it makes me happy to hear you say that."

Just make sure you never say that outside of this dungeon, Miss Iluna. If you do, Yukiki's probably gonna end up in the bad kind of dungeon.

“Okay, Yukiki! I’m going to play outside! I’ll be back!”

“Roger that. Don’t go too far, though. You know there are monsters out there. And make sure you come back before it gets dark.”

“Okaaay!”

Replying cheerfully, Iluna headed out of the throne room. But she didn’t come back even after nightfall.



“Rir, did you find Iluna?!”

I jumped to my feet the second Rir entered the dungeon. I pummeled him with questions, but he just shook his head sadly. No luck.

Shit! I let her do whatever she wanted because I didn’t think being overprotective would do her any favors, but that was so idiotically naive. God freaking dammit! I ground my teeth in fear and anger. Shii nestled close to me, seeing how worried I was.

“...I’m okay.”

Shii’s presence and understanding gave me some much-needed composure. I took a huge breath in, then slowly let it out to let all my negative emotions cool. *Calm down. Rushing off without a plan won’t help anything.*

“Sorry, Rir. I interrupted your report. Go ahead.”

To summarize Rir’s information, humans had kidnapped Iluna. Rir had been following Iluna’s scent when he suddenly picked up the scents of several humans. He’d followed the trail to a point just past the forest, where he found relatively fresh ruts in the dirt. Those ruts were tire tracks, and they’d led him to a carriage. Upon spotting it, he’d decided it would be smarter to go back to the dungeon with the information, so he’d hurried home as fast as he could.

Good call, Rir. I was glad he’d managed to catch up to them before they reached any human settlements. If that had happened, getting Iluna back would have been incredibly difficult even for a fenrir like him. The only positive here was that Iluna hadn’t been attacked by monsters. It was revolting to think about, but if she’d just been kidnapped and not killed, we could still rescue her.

No, we *would* still rescue her.

By some being's grace, Iluna had managed to escape being turned into a slave—or worse—the first time she'd been abducted, eventually leading to me finding and protecting her. Which meant that those assholes who'd tried it back then were still around. I obviously didn't have any conclusive proof, but I was damn sure they were responsible this time around too. It *had* to be them.

For all the times Iluna had gone outside to play since she first started staying with us, I'd only ever checked on her using the Maps feature one time. That was all I'd needed to be sure that she listened to my instructions. She didn't stray far from the dungeon, and even if she went into the woods, she knew to never go too deep inside.

According to Lefi, this area was one of many unexplored regions for humans. Those scumbags deliberately venturing all the way to a dangerous place like this to abduct Iluna had to have meant that they knew she was here. And the only ones who would have known that were the same dickheads who'd tried to pull this shady business the first time.

They must think they could turn a huge profit by selling her. That had to be the reason they were so obsessed with her, especially if they were willing to go as far as risking life and limb. Or... *Or they already had a buyer.* That was easily the worst-case scenario. If they did already have a buyer, chances were that she'd be out of our reach by tomorrow.

"Lefi, are there any human settlements nearby?"

"Indeed, I believe there is one not three hours by flight. You'll find it to the southeast."

Three hours, eh? That was closer than I'd expected. Actually, that sounded about right. The bastards had gotten a head start on us, plus it had taken a little bit for Rir to track them down.

I brooded in silence. Those sons of bitches had screwed with the wrong demon lord. I'd make them regret laying their hands on one of my own. By the time I was through with them, they'd be begging for death.

I pulled a rugged greatsword I'd made out from Inventory and gripped the

hilt. This was my next attempt at smithing after the flower blade. Its design was simple, but it had all the properties I wanted it to have: heft, a thick blade, and all the lethal killing force a demon lord could want. As the second generation of my personally crafted greatswords, I'd figured it would be nice to give it a proper name, so the engraving on it read "Purple Blade."

My Sorcerer's Grant ability had gone up a level, and with it, I learned a new sorcerous circuit—Poison: Weak—which has a special effect. When I poured my magic into the weapon, the circuit allowed the blade to become imbued with a weak poison. Any opponents cut by the blade would end up infected with that poison. The "Weak" part was a bit of a misnomer, though, because the effect was only weak if I didn't use a lot of magical power. Basically, I could make the effects of the poison stronger by putting more magic into it.

How did I learn this? By doing, of course. I'd gone out on another one of my hunts after making the sword and learning the new circuit. Before slashing a monster, I'd streamed an assload of my magic into the greatsword to strengthen the poison. Doing so had caused the wound it left to immediately turn purple, and there you had the origin of the name.

"Rir, you're coming with me. Track Iluna's scent, please. Shii, I know you want to come, but I need you to stay here and look after the dungeon, okay? Don't worry, we'll definitely save Iluna." After talking to my two pets, I turned to Lefi, who was standing next to me. "Lefi, I could really use your help. Will you come too?"

"Of course I will," she said, slumping her shoulders in disappointment. "It irks me that you believe you have to ask. That child is a part of my brood now; any who dare to touch her will receive a more than suitable punishment. But I ask that you wait a moment."

"Huh? Why?"

"You will understand soo—Ah, I sense that they are near. Come, Yuki. Follow me."

I made a noise that definitely made me sound just as confused as I knew I looked, but I still did as she said. The two of us walked out of the dungeon and through the cave.

As soon as we stepped outside, I noticed specks floating in the sky. At first, they just looked like dots, but they were gradually getting bigger, and more of them were showing up. Eventually, they got so big and there were so many of them that they almost blocked out the sky. Those dots, which were heading toward us, turned out to be a herd of dragons. And not pseudo-dragons like wyverns. No, they were actual dragons with gigantic, muscular bodies. As far as their stats, they were as strong as the most powerful monsters in the western region.

“These are—”

“My... Perhaps you could call them my subordinates? I thought it prudent to call on them to aid us in searching for Iluna. It is apparent now that that is no longer the goal, but it is better to have allies on hand, especially in the face of foolish humans who insist on testing themselves against might they cannot hope to conquer. This veritable army should suffice, yes?”

Lefi rounded off her mini-monologue with a cheeky, lopsided grin. *Wow, okay, hats off to you, Lefi.* She’d been quiet ever since we realized Iluna had disappeared, so I’d just assumed she didn’t care. But man, this was what she’d been up to? She’d rallied her forces for the mission on the sly.

“Lefi... You’re a good woman, you know that?”

“Heh heh, are you only just now realizing as much? That took you quite some time, Yuki.”

Touché. You’re not wrong, though. You’ve always been a good woman.

“Now then, Yuki, shall we go collect our young comrade?”

“Yeah. I’m counting on you, partner.”

Lefi cackled gleefully when I said that.

We’re on our way, Iluna. Be there soon.



A girl laid on something cold and hard.

“Ngh...?”

This felt wrong. Where was the soft, fluffy blanket cocooning her so warmly that waking up always took forever? Instead, today, the cold was so unpleasant that it roused Iluna's fuzzy brain. Her face pulling into a slight frown, she rubbed her eyes and sat up. The sight that entered her sleepy, unfocused gaze consisted of evenly spaced steel bars and a ceiling so low she couldn't even stand up. It woke her up instantly.

Feeling something strange, she looked down and saw that a collar had been wrapped around her neck. A thick chain extended from it and attached to a metal ring bolted to the floor. Iluna could feel magic running through the collar. It must have been a magical tool, and it was helping to keep her trapped in a cage.

"Nn..."

She remembered what had happened. She'd been playing outside when strange men suddenly appeared and covered her in a mysterious liquid. Doing so had made her lose consciousness, and she now found herself here.

In hopes of trying to figure out where she was, Iluna looked restlessly around the dimly lit environment. She saw a number of other cages just like hers, and in those cages were all kinds of people—some with animal ears growing out of their heads and others with sheeplike horns. None of them were men, however. The people in the cages were all women and girls.

Despite the mix of different races, they all had one thing in common: the despair and resignation clouding their eyes. Even Iluna, as young as she was, could see it. Plunged into confusion, she stared around the room as she tried desperately to make sense of the situation, but then the echo of footsteps clacking on the stone floor reached her ears. Two people were approaching.

"We got lucky, huh? I was sure she'd have been dead by now."

"Agreed. We would've ended up as monster fodder in the underground arena if she was."

Their voices grew closer as they continued their conversation, and soon, she saw them enter the room, far from her cage. She knew their faces. They were the ones who took her when she'd been playing outside the dungeon. They had also been with the men who'd destroyed her hometown.

“Oh, look, the little pest woke up. You caused a lot of trouble for us, goddammit!”

“Ow!”

His fist slammed into Iluna’s face through the cage’s steel bars. He hit her so hard that her tiny body flew backward and crashed into the other side of the cage, the back of her head smacking against the metal. Tears streamed from her eyes as the deep, throbbing pain spread violently through her.

“Hey, cut it out! I know how you feel, but if the goods are damaged, we’re the ones who’ll get reamed again. She’s headed for some perverted aristocrat, so deal with it.”

“Tch. Listen up, you brat. You’re gonna end up being the plaything of a horny-ass noble who goes wild for little girls’ bodies. Every day is gonna be so hellish for you that death would be better than that nightmare you’ll suffer. Sounds like a grand ol’ time, doesn’t it?”

The twisted sneer on the man’s face would make any sane person physically recoil in disgust. His words made Iluna shiver, and more tears started to well in her eyes, but she stayed silent and endured the verbal assault as she bore the physical pain.

It’s okay. It’s okay because I have Yukiki. An image of him popped into her mind. *Yukiki is sooo kind and warm and I love him so much! I was a little scared of him in the beginning...but now I’m not scared of him at all. Yukiki will definitely come save me!*

That thought became Iluna’s lifeline. She was different from before, when all she’d had left was despair after her family had been murdered and her village destroyed. This time, she had hope.

And, and I have my big sister too! Lady Lefifi spends too much time being a lazybones, but I can count on her when I need her. They’re both super strong! I mean, like, they made all those monsters in the woods afraid of them! So I know they’ll come soon and beat these bad guys. I’ll be fine. I can do this.

“Useless chit.” The man clicked his tongue in irritation because of Iluna’s lack of reaction. He gave a “Let’s go” to the other kidnapper and they both left the

room.

Once Iluna was sure they were gone, she scrubbed the tears from her face, then strained her young mind hard. *I know Yukiki and Lady Lefifi are coming, but I can't just sit and wait for them.* She knew from experience that no matter how long she waited, screaming and crying from the endless waves of sadness, no one would come to her aid. This time would be different, though. The only way she could hope to have any chance of finding help was if she made the first move herself. She had to do whatever she could, and right now, that was to buy time.

Running away was impossible. She didn't know where she was, so she wouldn't know where to go. If she wanted to buy time, her best option was to hide somewhere. Just until the two people she adored came to get her back, though. The forlorn feelings in Iluna's heart lightened with that decision. She had chosen her path.

"Please, Earth Spirit. Please help me," she whispered. Instantaneously, a ball of light with a slight brown tinge appeared in front of her. It shone so palely that it almost seemed to melt into the darkness, but it was undoubtedly there.



“The Spirit Emperor’s Blessed.” That was a title Iluna held—one which neither Yuki nor even Lefi knew existed.

The Spirit Emperor’s Blessed: Those who are favored by the Spirit Emperor, Yggdrasil. The Blessed can discern others’ intentions, both good and evil, and sense malice. Grants the Spirit Magic ability. This title and its accompanying abilities are invisible to others.

This title and its abilities had helped Iluna escape last time. It had also allowed her to survive countless monster attacks. It essentially gave her the means to protect herself long enough to be delivered into Yuki’s safekeeping.

“Please, Earth Spirit. I want you to take off this collar and open this cage.”

The faint glow flickered as if consenting to her wish while saying, “What a trivial request.” With a swishing sound, it dove into the collar so quickly that it looked like it had been sucked in. Then, just as quickly, a small *snick* came from the collar, like the sound of a key releasing a lock.

When a magical item loses its magical power source, it ceases to function as a magical item. For spirits, destroying magical items was child’s play. They could consume the power source in an instant and leave the vessel completely devoid of magic. Having learned from Iluna’s first escape, the criminals had turned this collar into a magical tool, but that made no difference at all to spirits. After all, spirits themselves *were* magic—they both fed on and used it as the medium for their existence. When it came to handling magic, no other being could ever hope to best them.

Its first task complete, the pale brown light slid through the air toward its next target, the lock on the cage itself. It burrowed inside, and after another few short moments, there was a second *click* of release.

Once Iluna verified that she could take off the collar and open the cage, she thanked the Earth Spirit, then called on the Dark Spirit. There were six Spirits in total: Earth, Water, Wind, Fire, Light, and Dark. Each specialized in a different kind of magic. The Earth Spirit could work with anything related to the earth,

minerals, metals, and the like, while the Dark Spirit's magical prowess lay in using the darkness to deceive others' eyes.

Iluna badly wanted to help the others in the room too, but she couldn't right now. She knew that if she freed the others like she'd freed herself, it would only cause a commotion. *Just wait, okay? I'll definitely save you all too.*

"Thank you, Dark Spirit," Iluna said, and just like that, it helped her disappear into the dim darkness without anyone taking notice.



"L-Lord Rulouvia! We have an emergency!"

Releaux Rulouvia, the chief administrator of the greater settlement of Alfiro, was unceremoniously roused from his bed in the manor hall by the local magistrate.

"What...is all this noise? Are monsters intending to attack?"

"Y-Yes, that's exactly the case! There are approximately a hundred of them flying near the Demonic Forest! They are heading directly in the direction of Alfiro!"

At that announcement, Releaux's half asleep brain immediately went on full alert.

"Blast it all; the situation already sounds quite grave. You mentioned that they were flying. Are they wyverns or the like?"

"U-Unfortunately, no. We used the Crystal of Sight to confirm what they were, and they... They're mature dragons, sir!"

"What?!"

Releaux couldn't suppress his astonishment at that information. "Mature dragon" was the term given to adult members of the renowned dragon race, the strongest creatures in this world. Monster classification differed based on an individual creature's abilities, but even the weakest mature dragon was considered a Disaster-level monster. Multiple parties of exceptionally powerful Adamantite-class adventurers would be needed to defeat even one such enemy, and there were a hundred of them bound for Alfiro.

This was the absolute worst possible scenario anyone could have imagined. With that many mature dragons, it wasn't just the town that was in danger. Unless they got extremely lucky, the whole country faced annihilation.

“Wake the entire garrison and every adventurer on standby! Round them all up! And I want a state of emergency declared throughout the town so that we can begin evacuating the residents! Begin at once!”

Heeding the chief administrator's directives, the magistrate rushed out of the room. Soon after, the whole manor bustled with activity, presumably because the magistrate had relayed the information given to them.

Releaux rushed out of his bed and put on the simplest coat he could find, then left the bedroom. He had seen the recent reports of strange occurrences in the Demonic Forest and deployed additional military forces to the area to preempt the unlikely event of trouble. Now, however, he wondered how long they could last even with their increased strength. He hoped it would be at least long enough to complete the evacuation of the citizens.

Today might be my last day in this world. With grim resolve, Releaux girded his loins and strode to his office to take full command of the situation.



The dragon horde flew quickly through the moonlit darkness of night. They were so well organized that they almost seemed like they were actually just a single enormous creature. It surprised me how quick they were to follow instructions considering how much power the group had, but then I realized that they were only this obedient because they were afraid of Lefi, who was literally at the top of their hierarchy. In this world where power meant everything, I doubt they even felt the need to oppose her. Given the ridiculous difference in power between her and them, they probably knew that defiance meant immediate death.

Not to be outdone by those of us with wings, Rir was doing a monster of a job keeping pace down below. The muscles in his legs bulged as he raced along the ground.

“I see it!”

With my super-enhanced eyesight that was nothing like what it had been on Earth, I finally spotted the human settlement off in the distance. It looked like a town rather than a village, but either way, it was dwarfed by the gargantuan walls circling it. I could tell from a single glance that they were very sturdy, especially as far as defenses went. The whole area was much bigger than I'd imagined.

Despite how late it was time-wise, the town lit up the darkness. If I had to guess, based on all the lights that were still on, I'd say the place was in a frenzy. The armed soldiers on top of the protective walls were also a dead giveaway. We were still a ways off, so they shouldn't have been able to see us, but it seemed they had somehow figured out we were en route.

A town in this other world... I would have loved to visit it under entirely different circumstances. At the same time I had that thought, Lefi, who'd been leading the dragon pack, pulled up next to me. Still in her human form, she used magic to create and sustain her wings.

"Yuki! If I unleash my powers, it is quite likely that I will destroy not only the town, but Iluna as well. So forgive me, but I must leave the task of rescuing the little princess to you!"

"Got it. Then your job is to make sure the dragons don't go berserk. I'm counting on you!"

"Hmph! As if I need to be told something so obvious!"

I rushed ahead, and only a few seconds after hearing Lefi's reply, I had flown over the wall surrounding the town. A bunch of unknown magics and arrows immediately flew at me, but I dodged all the attacks. Focused on the town itself, I folded my wings and swooped straight down. I hurtled toward the ground and made an abrupt landing, kicking up a cloud of dust and sending a shock wave through my whole body. Almost immediately after I touched down, Rir ran up to me. He'd easily made it over the defensive walls too, and had used the roofs to cross the town.

"Rir! Can you pick up Iluna's scent?!"

"Grrr!"

He turned his head to point in the direction we needed to go.

“All right, lead the way!”

I threw an arm around his neck and swung myself straight up onto his back. He took off like a rocket the second I did.

“Over here! They landed over here!”

Troops of armed men flashed past us on the way, but we ignored them. We didn’t have the time to deal with the riffraff. Our goal was Iluna’s location.

It only took a few minutes for us to ride through the town to a sprawling building that looked like it should have been on some sort of estate. It was two or three times the size of any of the other buildings nearby, so it probably belonged to someone with a lot of authority.

This is the place? The godforsaken den infested by those rats?

“Raaaaahhh!!!” I roared as the rage I’d been suppressing all this time finally boiled over. I leaped off Rir’s back and drew my greatsword, Purple Blade, hacking at the front doors with the heavy blade to blow them off their hinges.

“Wh-What in damnation?!”

“Who are you?!”

The momentum of my attack carried me into the building, which was decorated with tasteless furnishings in a weirdly shop-like way. It was all gaudy, pretentious crap that only new-money rich people enjoyed. The building was two stories tall, assuming the huge staircase all the way in the back that presumably led to the second floor was anything to go by, and had an ornamental chandelier that was way too flashy for its own good hanging from the ceiling.

My grand entrance seemed to have interrupted a group of shady, corrupt dudes who’d apparently been trying to escape. I could tell they were shady and corrupt by the *girls with chained collars around their necks* that they were trying to herd somewhere else. Didn’t look like Iluna was one of them, though.

These rat bastards just don’t know when to stop pissing a guy off, do they? I

thought, grinding my teeth in fury and disgust at the tragic sight I was seeing.

“Kill them, you idiots!”

As it turned out, these needle-dick clowns thought their best course of action was to eliminate me, an obvious intruder. After shoving the slave girls into a room farther away, they took out their weapons. Then they came at me all at once.

Suck my dick, assholes. You just signed your own death warrants. The first man who charged me was swinging a mace. I casually cut off his head with my greatsword and sent it flying, and I only used one hand to do it. Through the blade, I felt both the softness of flesh being severed and the hardness of bone being cut. Blood splashed on my cheek as the head rolled heavily on the floor.

The rest of the men, who’d been shouting angrily, got scared when they saw their comrade killed in an instant and stopped charging at me for a split second. I took advantage of the opening and dove straight at them, swinging my sword with all my might. A few reacted quickly enough to guard themselves with their weapons, but it made no difference to me.

“Ahhh!”

“Guuuh—”

The ones too slow to defend themselves had their upper halves sliced off and flung away. The ones who *did* defend were better off, but they still couldn’t handle the crushing power of my slashes. They slammed into the walls under the weight of my assault and crumpled to the ground, where they stopped moving. This was one of the reasons I’d chosen a greatsword as my main weapon—because it could make fantastic use of my monstrous physical strength without me having to use any special techniques.

“Die, motherfuckers!”

A single man from the first wave had just barely escaped the reach of my blade. He now faced me, sword in hand. He lunged at me, thinking he could find an opening as I swung my Purple Blade, but too bad for him I wasn’t alone here. Rir, my backup, closed the gap with him in the blink of an eye. The man was nowhere near fast enough to react and had his upper body crushed with a

single swipe of Rir's foreleg, killing him instantly.

"Tch! He's got a familiar! You know what to do!"

Seeing his allies die one after another, a man who was keeping his distance from the fight—the leader of the gang, maybe?—angrily shouted orders at the remaining henchmen. They brought out an object that was made of several linked crystal orbs, then started operating it.

A magical tool, eh? No sooner did I wonder about the light emanating from it than Rir suddenly staggered for a second. He righted himself just as quickly, but he still looked ashamed of himself for the momentary weakness.

"Hey, you all right?"

Rir nodded his head adamantly. "No issues here," he seemed to be saying. But by all appearances, he didn't seem all right. Something was wrong.

Jamming Crystal: Disturbs a monster's magic and dulls their movements. Efficacy varies based on the monster's strength. Quality: B+.

Analysis taught me exactly how the magical item worked. It also taught me something unexpected. I'd wondered how weak-ass human trash like these guys had managed to survive in our forest when all it took was a single stroke of my sword to kill one, and wouldn't you know it, it was because of this Jamming Crystal. That was one question answered.

For humans, entering the unexplored regions of the forest meant putting their lives at risk. If they knew that—and they did—then why would they willingly flirt with death to bring Iluna back from there? I'd initially thought that the humans who'd kidnapped her were just that strong, but it turned out that it was their *equipment* that was strong. I couldn't help but sneer at how simple an answer "the humans had never been in any real danger in the Forest" was.

"Damn you, stop bluffing! We've got you by the short and curlies!" the leader spat, not even trying to hide how irritated he was by the mocking look on my face. He then started barking orders at his underlings. "Kill him now, you

imbeciles! Don't you know that the people who control familiars are actually weak themselves?! We have the advantage in numbers, so hurry up and rush him!"

Are these dumb fucks blind? Did they completely miss the fact that I've already killed a truckload of their gang buddies? Or are they just so brain-dead that they don't even understand what happened?

"It's okay, Rir. You stay there."

Rir looked upset. He clearly wanted to jump in front of me and fight but couldn't because of the Jamming Crystal. Once I reassured him that things would be fine, I started working my magic—and unleashed one of my techniques.

"Wha— Hrngh?!"

The worthless sack-of-shit leader screamed in terror when he saw my water dragons. You know, the ones made of high-speed water currents that I'd been using a lot lately.

"Go."

At my signal, my dragons enthusiastically soared through the air to gorge themselves on the filth surrounding me. With no way out, the goons were absorbed into the dragons' bodies. Their pointless struggles to escape the water only made them drown faster, and that was only if the currents dicing them up didn't kill them first. Between the two, it wasn't long before not a single one of them was so much as twitching. All that was left were piles of corpses and flesh, guts splattered everywhere, and blood staining everything red. It was like looking straight into hell.

It was, and yet not a single shred of emotion flickered in my heart or changed my mind about killing humans. I felt absolutely nothing. Maybe it was too little too late, but I finally realized I had officially given up being human. With this bloodbath, I had laid that existence—and my attachment to it—to rest.

"Whatever. Probably better this way anyway," I muttered as I smashed the crystal device those asswipes had brought in. In other words, I no longer felt any hesitation over sending human scumbags to meet their maker. Not for

these guys, and not for any in the future. “Rir, think you can find Iluna’s scent?”

“Grr...”

He couldn’t pinpoint her precise location anymore because the smell of blood was too overpowering. That was what the apologetic expression on his face was telling me. It was fine, though. All I had to do was kill my way through each and every one of these bastards. If I did that, I’d eventually run into one who knew where she was.



Back to the matter at hand.

Name: Hier

Race: Human

Class: Con Man

Level: 12

HP: 0/290

MP: 0/72

Strength: 160

Stamina: 140

Agility: 81

Magic: 26

Dexterity: 73

Luck: 91

Abilities: Swindling 3

Title: Con Man, Kidnapper, Murderer

Name: Sdedun

Race: Human

Class: Marauder

Level: 17

HP: 0/331

MP: 0/81

Strength: 213

Stamina: 202

Agility: 98

Magic: 27

Dexterity: 105

Luck: 171

Abilities: Axe-Wielding 1

Title: Rapist, Murderer

Name: Kedank

Race: Human

Class: Accountant

Level: 7

HP: 0/181

MP: 0/82

Strength: 115

Stamina: 102

Agility: 126

Magic: 31

Dexterity: 211

Luck: 117

Abilities: Arithmetic 3, Speed-Reading 2

Title: Rapist, Fugitive

Weak. Every single one of these lowlifes was weak as shit. I found it hilarious that they could be so ridiculously weak when they lived in a world as tough as this one. My own starting stats had all been around 600, give or take, but these jokers had barely cracked 200. Christ, even Iluna had them beat on both MP and Magic. Humans were seriously this weak here? Well, damn. No freaking wonder the dungeon chose not to make me one.

“Oy, spit it out. Where’s the girl with the golden hair? The one who belongs to the demon species.”

I was talking to the fat pig sitting in the official-looking chair behind the official-looking desk in this official-looking room. It was very unlike the other rooms, what with its fancy interior design and the lack of corpses everywhere.

“Insolent pest, do you know who I— Gaaahhh!”

“Sorry, piggy, I don’t. See, I’m not so great with faces, especially when it comes to telling the difference between livestock like all of you. You should ask a farmer to help you with that,” I suggested rudely as I brutally sewed his hand and the desk together with a dagger I’d borrowed from a corpse.

“Y-You have no idea the wrath you’re bringing upon yourself! Th-The nobles who protect me will— Mpf!”

“Stop showering me in spit, you disgusting tub of lard. Makes me wanna kill you, so cut it out.”

He grimaced in pain but kept quiet after I kicked him in the face.

The reason I was conducting this absurd interrogation was because I still hadn’t managed to find Iluna. I’d searched the entire building for her, cutting off heads and slicing up bodies as the trash decided to take it itself out on my warpath, but I didn’t find a trace of her anywhere. Fed up with the wild goose chase, I’d used the Scout ability to look for the rest of the asshats lying in wait for me, found out that they were in this room, and charged straight in. Meanwhile, Rir, who was still unable to follow Iluna’s scent, was searching for her elsewhere on the grounds.

“All right, asshole, since you apparently had trouble remembering where she was the first time I asked, I’m going to be nice and ask you again. This time you’re going to be a good little piggy and give me the right answer, got it?”

As I spoke, I pressed the point of my greatsword Purple Blade against the swine’s neck and ran my magic through it. The sorcerous circuit reacted, creating geometric patterns across the blade. Though all the enemies up until now had been so weak there were no opportunities to actually test the poison’s strength, using it as a threat was a good enough trial run.

Poison dripped off the blade and onto the floor. It sizzled and ate its way through like sulfuric acid burning a hole through pretty much anything it came in contact with. The pig jerked and trembled in fear as he watched it happen. It looked like he was being electrocuted.

“Think hard, now. If you still can’t remember, I can’t promise that my sword won’t shake and accidentally cut you, and that doesn’t seem like it would be any fun. I’m looking for a little girl with golden hair. A vampire, around seven or eight years old. About this tall, I’d say.”

I spoke clearly and slowly so there’d be no mistaking my words while also using hand gestures to describe Iluna. Unfortunately, though, the pig didn’t give me the answer I wanted.

“I-I don’t know!”

“The fuuu?”

“N-No! I’m telling you the truth! I really don’t know! She’d already disappeared by the time I went looking for her!”

“What...?”

I eased the tip of the blade off his neck just a teeny bit. Thinking he’d found a way to save his own life, the pig started rattling off every detail he could recall, which was kinda hilarious to watch. If I understood his word vomit right, Iluna had managed to use her powers to escape.

Despite all the trouble they’d gone to of going into the forest to retrieve her, binding her with magical restraints, and putting guards on her because of their obsession with how much money she’d make them, these clowns hadn’t even

realized she was gone until it was too late. Once they did finally notice, they immediately started a manhunt for her since they already had a buyer lined up, but it didn't last long. They called it off real quick when they found out that our massive battalion of dragons was on its way to attack from the Forest.

And that's how we got to where we were now. Seemed the two men who'd been assigned to watch her were part of the pile of corpses in the room, so I couldn't even make them tell me what they'd done to her from the time of her abduction to right before we showed up. Dead men tell no tales, after all. I might have jumped the gun in killing them.

Wait. That means Iluna escaped on her own back when I first found her too. Damn, she really is one clever kid. She must have understood that staying trapped here wouldn't have helped her. I still didn't know how she'd gotten away, but what mattered was that she was all right.

"Boss! I brought reinforcements!"

Well, now what did we have here? I guess I hadn't found all of his minions, since a lone man rushed into the room.

"N-Nice work! Bwa ha ha, you imbecile! Did you really think I was afraid?! I was only pretending so I could...buy...some time..."

The obese pig, initially elated by the arrival of his comrade, trailed off quickly when he saw who else had joined us.

"Looks like Iluna got outta this place, Rir."

Yup, my fenrir buddy. With one of his front legs, Rir had casually slapped away the man like he was swatting at a fly, then just as casually sauntered into the room. Of course, it wasn't quite so casual for the guy who'd gotten whacked given the way he flew through the air and smashed into the wall hard. His head cracked open on impact, spilling blood everywhere. Didn't take him long to stop moving either.

"I-I still have more men! Many more are coming—"

"You mean the men outside? The ones whose guts are all over the place?"

Through our "communication," Rir told me that he'd taken care of them on

his way here. Apparently, there were even more dead bodies in the hallway now than just the ones I didn't even remember killing on my rampage.

"Ngh... You bastaaard!"

He finally accepted the fact that no one would help him. Desperate to save his bacon, he lunged at the corpse of one of his bodyguards, stole their sword, and tried to swing it at me.

"Too slow. You need to exercise more, piggy."

I dodged his slash easily and responded with one of my own, though I made sure to control my attack so that my blade just barely grazed his neck.

"Gh... Aaaghhh!"

The swine let out a grating scream as he writhed in pain. The poison that had gotten on him had started eating away at his flesh. A greasy film of sweat started coating his bright red cheeks as his face twisted in anguish. He stretched his hands out toward me, begging me to help him, but I simply used Analysis to pull up his stats and watch his HP steadily decline. The poison was doing its job well.

Sleazeball couldn't move anymore. I knew that for sure. The first thing the poison did was paralyze its victim and make them lose control of their movements. After that, it started eating away at them from the inside out. The pain of having their flesh devoured would make them feel like they were being burned alive, and their sight would slowly fade to black. They would die the same way they'd lived: pathetically.

That's the kind of poison it was—or at least the kind I *thought* it was. I'd obviously never experienced its effects myself, so I was still a little fuzzy on the details.

"See ya, piggy. Take care of yourself while I'm gone; you're not looking so good there."

I gave the rapidly color-changing pig one last look as I left the room.

There was quite the eyeful waiting for me and Rir when we walked out of the

building. A bunch of humans were lined up in a rough semicircle, all of them holding a weapon of some sort and standing in a way that made it obvious how terrified they were of us. I *had* wondered why no one else had raided the building despite all the ruckus, and here was my answer. They were gonna try to catch us in this net when we came outside instead of charging at us while we were inside.

I was almost positive these were trained, experienced fighters. Their weapons and armor looked halfway decent, and their movements were sharp and focused. These guys actually seemed like they would put up a fight, making them the complete opposite of the morons I'd just slaughtered.

Ugh. This is such a pain in the ass, goddammit. I stood in front of them, took a deep breath, and...

"Iluuunaaaaaaaaa!" I screamed as loud as physically possible, hoping that she'd be able to hear it, wherever she was.

"Yukiki!"

The men surrounding us had instinctively covered their ears, but I heard her voice coming from somewhere near them.

Whoa, she's a lot closer than I thought she'd be, I thought as I looked around, trying to find exactly where she was. *Ah, there you are.* She had to have been hiding herself with some kind of magic because she suddenly appeared out of thin air in the dark alleyway near another building, not too far from the cluster of soldiers.

"Iluna!"

She scrambled toward me as fast as her little legs would carry her, and before I knew it, she flew into my arms with a small *thump*. I hugged her tightly, squeezing her tiny body in relief.

"You did great, Iluna. Yukiki is so proud of you."

"Yeah, I did! I worked so hard, Yukiki!"

Iluna gave me a big smile as I gently stroked her head, clinging to me while I kept up the reassuring pats. Then, out of nowhere, she looked like she was

going to cry. She stared up at me as if she'd just remembered something important.

"Please, Yukiki, please! There are other girls trapped here too! You have to help them too!"

"I will. I'll take care of it, so do you think you'll be okay heading back with Rir?"

"Mm-hmm!" She nodded energetically, another smile on her face. "I'll be fine, Yukiki! Me and Rir will wait for you!"

"Good girl. I'm counting on you. Rir, get her outta here. I'll catch up later."

He gave me a worried glance, but nodded obediently right after. Then, he let Iluna hop on his back before he took off running.

"Hey, the wolf is getting away!"

"Never mind that! Focus here!"

The armed troops got distracted by Rir, but that command quickly redirected their attention back to me. They raised their weapons—and their guards—again. Too bad for them I'd already decided their fates.

"I'll kill every last one of you scum-sucking humans!" I screamed in rage, having forgotten my past life as a human. Magic started pouring out from my body as well, shattering the nearby buildings' windows one by one. The air crackled with tension as the violent sound echoed through the night. At the same time, assaulted by the thick surge of magical energy, the men surrounding me started passing out, all of them dropping like flies.

Worthless sacks of shit.

I'd spotted a bruise on Iluna's cheek. Somebody had hit her. This goddamn useless human species really thought they could treat this world as their playground, doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. Wrath had me seeing red and made me start thinking dark, ugly thoughts. And what about these lowlifes? Did they feel anything at all when they saw her like that?

Let them perish. This world would be better off if humans went extinct.

Gritting my teeth, I squeezed the hilt of my greatsword so hard I nearly crushed

it.

“Calm yourself, Yuki.”

At that moment, something soft and warm wrapped around my back. The gentle heat melted away my fury bit by bit, just like snow thawing.

“...Lefi.”

The heat was coming from her. She’d somehow made her way over here without me noticing. With her arms still wrapped around me from behind, she laid her head on my shoulder blades. For some reason, her familiar scent was a massive comfort.

“Calm yourself. You’ve achieved your goal, yes? And have you not succeeded in meting out great punishment on those who hurt Iluna? Let us return home. We no longer have any need to remain in a place like this. Our work is done.”

I said nothing in response.

“Moreover, Yuki, I hunger. I expended a significant amount of effort today, so I expect you to reward me with something suitably delicious.”

I could feel the playful smirk in her soothing voice. I took a deep breath in, then let it out with a wry grimace.

“Yeah, you’re right. I’ll give you a special treat when we get home.”

“Oh? If *you* would call something special, then I await it with bated breath. But expect no forgiveness should it not meet my expectations.”

“Challenge accepted. You’ll get so hooked on it that you’ll wonder how you ever thought anything else was delicious.”

“W-Well... I will bear that in mind, then.”

Since Lefi had deliberately talked to me with her usual condescending attitude, I dished it back to her the same way I always did. Just another normal conversation between the two of us. Thanks to her, the storm raging inside me had let up. I was back to my regular self in no time at all.

“...P-Pardon me for intruding on your conversation. You’re a member of the demon species, yes?”

As soon as I calmed down, those words floated into my ears. They came from a man who hadn't lost consciousness even though he, like the others, had collapsed to the ground because of my outburst of magic a few minutes ago.

"I might be. What's it to you, old man?"

"M-My name is Releaux Rulouvnia. I'm the administrator entrusted with the management of this town. Forgive me, but am I correct in presuming that your reason for coming here was to retrieve one of your own people?"

"Yeah. My little sister was kidnapped, so I came to get her back."

"P-Please allow me to offer my sincerest apologies for this incident. A-As a token of good faith, won't you accompany me to my estate?"

Is this dude right in the head? Why the hell is he inviting me to his house when he knows I'm part of a family of creatures that actively hates humans? While I was trying to make sense of it, I noticed that the man called Releaux was paler than a ghost and kept sneaking glances at Lefi. Hold up, is he using Analysis? You sly dog.

He *was* using Analysis, meaning he knew that Lefi was actually the Supreme Dragon. She had mentioned that humans thought of her as some sort of legendary creature, and based on his reaction, she had definitely been telling the truth. No wonder he'd been so polite and submissive this whole time. If I were in his shoes and meeting a literal mythical creature like her in the flesh, I'd probably act the same way.

"What say you, Yuki? I will follow your lead."

"Let's do it. I have something I want to take care of anyway."

Iluna hardly ever asked for anything, so I needed to make sure I granted her wish.



"Again, I must sincerely apologize for this incident. We caused you a great deal of trouble. I would be willing to do anything if it meant your forgiveness."

The chief administrator's manor was completely different from the tasteless building I'd been in earlier. It was modestly but tastefully decorated, creating an

overall refined atmosphere. Releaux had brought us into the parlor, where we sat on couches across from each other.

“You said your name was Releaux, yes? And I believe you know what I am as well?”

Lefi spoke for us first. She fixed her eyes on him intensely, her tone so deathly cold it practically froze the air. I’d never seen her act like this.

“O-Of course. I am exceedingly aware of your true form.” The town’s chief couldn’t hide the tremble in his voice as he replied.

“If you are the head of this town, then you must surely know about the agreement that exists between myself and the humans.”

“Agreement?” I asked.

“Ah, I neglected to mention it to you, Yuki. Long ago, there was a period of great unrest in this world, with many determined to obtain power at any cost. Naturally, a great number of fools who thought to attack me were amongst them. I found the whole ordeal quite vexing, at some point deciding that I intended to wholly obliterate the humans’ country. I thought it best to crush the root of their existence so that none would trouble me again.”

“W-Wow, okay then.”

“When the humans’ king at the time learned of my plan, he rushed to parley with me. He proposed that neither side approach the other, essentially forming a treaty of mutual nonaggression. That agreement should be in effect even at present, and yet...”

Mm, I get it. Diplomacy via political pressure. Damn, Lefi, you’re too slick.

“On this occasion, your people chose to abduct a child I consider a part of my brood. Which means *you humans* are the ones who broke the treaty that *you yourselves* sought. How do you intend to repent?”

“Th-This was an unexpected incident for us as well, I assure y—”

“You would have me show mercy, then, by considering your human circumstances?”

“I-If possible.”

The chief was sweating literal bullets and his face was whiter than a sheet. He was stiffer than a board too. In complete contrast, his opponent in these negotiations looked like a typical middle school teenybopper. I honestly felt kinda bad for the poor schmuck.

“Well, I myself have no particular demands worth mentioning. This man, however, does. So, in lieu of my own, you will accede to his with good grace, will you not?”

Lefi gave me a quick peek to signal that this was where I stepped in. *N-No way... Did she put all this pressure on him just so it'd be easier for me to get what I came here for?*

“Jeez, Lefi, what’s with you today? It’s scary how competent you are.”

“Hmph. This is revenge for your constant degradation of my character as a ‘lazy, good-for-nothing dragon.’ On occasions like these, I must present myself appropriately as the Supreme Dragon. Bah, this is no time for digressions, Yuki. We are still in the midst of the negotiations, so I would have you behave seriously.”

“Oh, right, sorry.”

At the dumbfounded expression on the chief’s face because of our verbal rally, Lefi discreetly cleared her throat and put her Supreme Dragon facade back on.

“In any case, this man will dictate the terms of the settlement,” she said, circling us back to the topic at hand. “Yuki, speak.”

“Oh, s-sure.”

I was in a much better frame of mind thanks to Lefi having calmed my anger. Killing the bastards I’d wanted to kill had done a lot for my mental state too. I breathed deeply to center myself, then spoke with the most intimidating tone I could give my voice.

“Let me see... First, I’m extending the agreement you have with Lefi to include me and mine. You are not to interact with us. I don’t know what you humans will do in the future and I frankly don’t care, but if something like this ever happens again, I *will* kill you. Make no mistake, I’ll kill you all.”

After all the carnage I caused because of Iluna's abduction, I seriously doubt they'll even think about doing something that stupid again.

"I-I will assuredly enforce that stipulation. I'll make sure that entry into the Demonic Forest is completely forbidden."

The Demonic Forest... So that's what they called the woods surrounding the dungeon. Interesting.

"Next, the slaves in this town—both the girls in the building I attacked and any others around here. I want every last slave handed to me."

Maintaining eye contact with the chief, I tilted my head in Lefi's direction to imply that I'd send in the dragons on standby up in the air if he tried to refuse me. Sure, I was speaking softly, but I had Lefi as my big stick. No shame in my game, using someone much more powerful than me as a weapon to get what I wanted. From now on, if Lefi asked me to jump, I'd ask how high as long as I could keep using her as a proxy for my dirty work. Kidding. Sort of.

"And you would be satisfied with just those two terms?"

Whaaaat? I thought for sure he wouldn't want to budge on that condition.

"When I said 'every last slave,' I meant exactly that. Every. Last. One. Got it?"

"Understood. I'll make the arrangements right away. Will you need any carriages to transport them?"

"Uh, hmm... Lefi, they can ride the dragons, right?"

"Provided there are no more than three hundred of them, yes."

"Really? We don't need any carriages, then. We'll take them ourselves."

I don't think there are three hundred. There better freaking not be!

"As you wish. Now then, I ask that you please wait here for a short time while we complete our preparations. Alto, you have your orders!"

The chief's subordinate bowed to us and immediately left the parlor to relay the instructions to others and get the process underway. So, with that disappointingly anticlimactic resolution, thus ended the "Attack on the Nearby Town in Another World!" chapter of our story.

“They’re gone.”

Watching the dragon horde fly off into the distance until they were nothing more than dark specks on the horizon, Releaux slumped in his chair with a deep, relieved sigh. The whole experience had terrified him. When he’d first sighted the swarm, he’d had concerns about the possibility of the Supreme Dragon’s involvement, and those concerns had ended up being well-founded. He’d certainly been shocked to see such a mythical creature in the form of a lovely young girl, but the outrageous power lying dormant within said form had been indisputably that of the Supreme Dragon itself—or herself, in this case.

Releaux had initially distinguished himself on the battlefield as a strong warrior, and that talent eventually earned him the post of chief administrator of this frontier town. Those who couldn’t discern their opponents’ strength in the heat of battle didn’t live long. Because of that, Releaux, with many years of experience in various locations on different kinds of assignments, had naturally mastered that skill. Consequently, he had realized the difference between his power and hers with a single check of her stats. That gap in their attributes only served to emphasize the fact that he’d been in the presence of *the* legendary dragon.

He would have known that even without the data, though. When he’d first laid eyes on her, a dread he’d never experienced even on the battlefield had flared through his entire body. He’d been so afraid that he almost wondered if the true meaning of fear had been condensed and crammed into the form of that little girl. Truly, she had almost frightened him senseless. He was certain that he would have lost consciousness had he lost his focus for even a moment.

Then there was the man next to her. He had hair so unrelievedly black that it embodied darkness itself. One of his eyes matched that color, while the other was bloodred. There wasn’t anything special about his face, but his gaze had been so sharp that it alone left a strong impression on Releaux. The man’s power didn’t match that of the Supreme Dragon, but he had more than enough to give off a threatening aura.

“A demon lord, huh...?”

Based on the man's class, Releaux suspected that a new dungeon had been born in the Demonic Forest. Still, the man's attitude toward the Supreme Dragon left him reeling. There was also the wolf who'd accompanied him to worry about. It was a fenrir, of all things—another legendary monster in its own right. Releaux could easily imagine how much damage the man and his familiar would have caused to the town even without the Supreme Dragon. He shuddered again at the thought.

Fortunately, both the Supreme Dragon and the demon lord had ultimately proved to be quite logical people. He had sweat profusely when the man had gone insane with rage, but thankfully for all concerned, the Supreme Dragon had managed to pacify him enough for them to open discussions and restore the peace. Even if the town's military forces had continued their assault against the demon lord, he would have prevailed regardless, leaving the settlement in ruins. That was why Releaux had approached them in the first place, despite the man's menace. He felt that if the situation could be handled peacefully then he had to at least try.

“Good grief. Those festering, bloated pigs simply *had* to go and draw the attention of such dangerous beings...”

Releaux's tone was irritated as he pictured the face of the disgusting man responsible for this whole ordeal. But there was a silver lining as far as he was concerned. As he and his entire gang had been exterminated, that man had reaped what he'd sowed. Their *modus operandi* had been to acquire slaves by stealing them before selling them for outrageously high prices. They'd also been involved in numerous other illegal activities, essentially having established their own criminal syndicate.

Those horrible men had been a thorn in Releaux's side for a long time. He'd tried many times to expose them, but their connections to the aristocracy had run deep. He'd been unable to successfully arrest even a single one of the criminals because they were under the nobles' extensive protection. If the villains were well and truly caught, the dark deals the nobles themselves had made with the gang would have been revealed to the public, and they certainly didn't want that. So, with his hands forcibly tied, all Releaux had been able to do was stand by and watch helplessly.

All things considered, though, there hadn't been too much damage to anyone else in the town. The pigs bore the brunt of the assault, which in itself *should* have counted as a positive. *If only*, he thought as he let out a wry chuckle. The real problem was what would come next.

Lately, a powerful faction within the country that underestimated the might of the Supreme Dragon was making calls to the government to expand into the resource-rich Demonic Forest. Releaux knew without a doubt that those people would use this incident as a pretext for retaliation and demand that troops be dispatched against the Supreme Dragon and the demon lord. If that happened, those two wouldn't take the assault lightly. It was painfully obvious to him that humans would be digging their own graves if that faction were allowed to get its way.

I must find a way to stop the situation from escalating, no matter what it takes. His allegiance to the country was unwavering, so he would resolutely obstruct any foolish attempts to embroil his fatherland in a crisis of potentially epic proportions. That feeling was stronger than ever now that the Supreme Dragon was no longer the only threat they might face.



"Okay, so what should we do about them?"

We were back home, right outside the cave entrance. The humongous boulder I'd used to seal the opening—I wanted that bad boy *closed*—when we left was back in Inventory. Now, I stood in front of the entrance, hands on my hips and feet spread all assertive-like. I looked at the few dozen girls and young women huddled together in front of me, trembling in fear. We'd flown them back here without really telling them much of anything, and I could tell by the looks on their faces they were afraid of what would happen to them all the way out here.

By the way, Iluna was asleep in the dungeon. When we first landed, I'd taken her inside and tucked her into bed; all the crap she'd gone through had left her completely drained, and I couldn't blame her. She and Shii were both off in dreamland now, but in Shii's case, it was because it had been so excited that she was safe that it tired itself out.

“Do you mean to tell me you did not think ahead?” Lefi asked.

“No? Not at all? Yeah, not even a little bit.”

“You are quite the misleading character, Yuki. You seem responsible on the surface, but in reality, both your thought processes and actions are much too haphazard.”

I prefer the word “spontaneous,” but yeah, sounds about right.

“So, uh...do you all have homes to go back to? Families, maybe?”

Even though they still looked scared, the girls started murmuring to each other. I figured they were discussing how to handle me and the situation in general. After a little while, a gentle-seeming girl with sheeplike horns began speaking timidly.

“Y-Yes, Master Demon Lord. Almost all of us are migrant workers who were captured by the slavers. The ones who aren’t also seem to have families to return to.”

“Oh? So you know that I’m a demon lord?”

“Y-Yes, because the nature of your magic is quite different.”

Is that how that works? Interesting.

“Then that certainly makes things easier for us. Hey, Lefi, can you ask the dragons to take them where they wanna go?”

“A simple task. Consider it done.”

With that, Lefi looked up at the sky and beckoned the dragons with her finger. They immediately headed down toward her, not making the Supreme Dragon wait even a second. Soon, they were all hovering in a single-file line, ready to transport their passengers.

Not gonna lie, their obedience meant smooth sailing for whatever we needed to get done. I did have to wonder what exactly Miss Lefi had done to them to earn that level of subservience in the first place, though.

“The curious look on your face reveals to me your burning question, and I shall answer it. Some time ago, I gave them quite the *exacting* lesson on the

reality of who reigns supreme. Nothing more, nothing less.”

Wow, really?

“Okay, so, whoever has a home to go back to, have a dragon take you there. They’re intelligent, so they’ll take you wherever you tell them you want to go,” I explained, which put a little bit of hope back in the slave girls’ dead eyes.

I should probably mention that there was a reason all the slaves were girls. The town we’d gone to was part of a country that was currently at war, so all the nonhuman men were forced onto the front lines. Didn’t matter if they were demon, demi-human, or even therianthrope, if they were old and strong enough to fight then that’s what they were doing. They were essentially being used as war slaves. The adult women in those species had been taken as fighters too because of their superior physical abilities—compared to regular humans, anyway.

Also, for as big as the town was, there was a reason it had less than a hundred girls as slaves. Part of that was because of the nonhumans being used for war efforts, but the big reason behind it was the law. Officially, slave trafficking was illegal in that country, so any slaves on the market were being sold unlawfully. Since only criminal organizations that already had their dirty hands in other shady shit—like the group run by that fat pig—dealt with slave trading, the number of slaves was pretty limited. Getting the chief administrator guy to hand them over to me had probably been so quick and painless because it was easier for him to give them up than to figure out how to deal with such a thorny legal issue.

Thinking about all those things together had me struggling with some complicated emotions—mostly the suspicion that an annoying problem had been dumped in my lap. But it was whatever, really. I’d fulfilled Iluna’s wish, and that was good enough for me since she almost never asked for anything.

“A-Are you certain...?”

“Yeah. Our girl was kidnapped too, and she wanted to make sure I’d rescue you all. Oh, but if any of you don’t have a place to go, just tell me. I’m the one who brought you here in the first place, so there’s no way I’m just gonna abandon you.”

I can take care of a few, at least. The more there are, the harder it'll be.

At that announcement, the girls turned toward each other again to have another whisper-talk. When they were done, they turned back to me and bowed their heads deeply.

“Though we are all of different species, we were all forced into the same circumstances without our consent. And now, we all share the same sentiment for you. Master Demon Lord, we are deeply grateful for your compassion.”

“So, just you two left, huh?”

After seeing off the herd of dragons and their passengers, I turned to the remaining two slave girls.

“I was raised with the teaching that debts, especially those of gratitude, must be fully repaid. With that in mind, if it doesn't trouble you overmuch, I would like to support you.”

This came from the gentle, sheep-horned girl the group had picked to speak for them. She had long white hair that reached all the way to her hips and a great body with curves in all the right places. To be brutally honest, I was having a tough time figuring out where to look because the raggedy fabric covering her was way too small; all it did was accentuate a certain part—make that two—between her neck and waist. Also, I couldn't tell if she was forcing it or not, but she gave off a calm, almost nonchalant vibe, like the kind you'd get from a refined young lady or a responsible older sister looking after her younger siblings.

“E-Excuse me, my lord, but is that a mighty fenrir over there?”

The other girl was a beast-human with dog ears and a tail. She had short, chestnut-colored hair and was built a lot like Lefi and Iluna. Thank the freaking maker for that last part, because as rude as it might be to say that her body type didn't really do anything for me, it sure took a load off my mind. Still, though, if there was one thing these two had in common it was that they were drop-dead gorgeous—which, unfortunately, I could totally see being the reason they were abducted into slavery.

“Hm? Oh, yeah, he is. Why do you ask?”

“I-I thought as much! P-Please, my lord, let me stay here! I’ll do whatever you want, even the most annoying chores if you say yes!”

“Huh? Uh, sure, that’s fine. But is there something special about him?” I asked as I stroked Rir’s luxurious fur.

“Fenrirs are the same as gods to us werewolves! I left my village for the outside world despite everyone being against the idea, so if I can serve a great fenrir, I can prove myself to all the naysayers!”

“C-Can you now? Well, good for you, then.”

The werewolf girl yelped gleefully and punched the air. Her high energy threw me for a bit of a loop. *Looks like I’ve got another strong personality to deal with.*

“Hear that, Rir? You’re a god. Neat, huh?”

“Grr...”

I could feel the dry smile in his quiet growl. I totally knew where he was coming from.

“Oh, right. I’m Yuki. That’s Lefi, and this is Fluffrir. There’s one more inside the dungeon, but I’ll introduce you to her tomorrow. What are your names?”

“My name is Leila. Please instruct me as you see fit, sir,” the girl with the sheep horns said in a soft, sort of casual way while giving me a deep bow.

Ummm, I’m gonna end up seeing what I’ve been trying really hard not to look at if you keep that up, so it’d be great if you raised your head, like, right the f now.

“I’m Lewin Groll, a werewolf. Please call me Lew!”

If I didn’t know better, I’d have thought Lew had been plucked straight out of Hope’s Summit Academy. She was serious Ultimate Team Manager material. *They look absolutely nothing alike—I mean, no duh they don’t—but I’ll be damned if they don’t talk the same way.*

“How about we leave the details for tomorrow? You two must be tired too, so let’s just head inside and call it a day.”

“Ummm, through this cave...?”

“I know what you’re thinking, but don’t worry, it’s nothing like that. You’ll see once we get there.”

I kept the girls in my line of sight as they cautiously made their way through the cave to the dungeon. Lefi, who’d decided everything was all taken care of, headed off with them.

“So, uh, Lefi...” I said to stop her.

“What troubles you?” The dragon girl with the silver hair turned around and looked up at me.

“The thing is, I... I just wanted to thank you. For, you know, everything. You saved the day today.”

Shocked speechless for just a second, she recovered soon enough and smirked.

“Might you be referring to the moment of your imminent rampage when I held you in my arms and soothed you as though you were a newborn?”

“Gah! Can you please forget that ever happened?! Seriously, I’m begging you!”

Lefi cackled like a maniac at my self-loathing expression.

“Hearken to me, Yuki,” she said suddenly after busting her gut for a while. “I have been alone for a very long time. Eons, it has felt like. The world around me had grown so deeply tedious; it is as if all the color had been leached from existence itself.”

I said nothing, though I knew that her loneliness was a result of her being so overwhelmingly powerful. She’d been through so much in her incredibly long life as the Supreme Dragon that I couldn’t even begin to understand it.

“But then, some time ago, I met a certain man, and now my days overflow with color once more. It is such a refreshing, delightful feeling that is so unbelievably precious to me. So, Yuki, I ask this boon of you: paint my world even more vibrantly.”

Though she smiled playfully and said those words teasingly, I replied

seriously.

“I will,” I said. Just those two words and a slight nod of my head.

Chapter 4: Enhancing a Dungeon

“Who are these ladies, Yukiki?”

With her cheeks puffed out and arms folded angrily, Iluna’s whole body screamed, “I’m mad!” What a freaking cutie.

“Um, well, you see, Miss Iluna... They asked if they could stay with us and I didn’t have the heart to say no, especially when I was the one who dragged them all the way out here. So I said yes.”

I was currently kneeling on the ground seiza-style in front of Iluna, who had forced me into that posture, mind you, and trying my best to explain the situation. In our makeshift family, the position had become a custom for anyone who had to repent and reflect on their bad deeds. Iluna had seen me punish Lefi with it several times, so of course she’d memorized how we used it.

“Yukiki, I, I was sooo happy when you came to rescue me! But I don’t remember giving you permission to keep mistresses!”

“Huh? What? Uhhh, I’m sorry?”

Wait, whaaat...? Hold on, back it up. Why exactly is she mad at me? Also, newbies, for the love of any god anywhere, please stop looking at me with those warm, fuzzy eyes. I need you both to back me up here. Jesus, Joseph, and Mary.

“Honestly, Yukiki! I had no idea you were such an adult-rer-tous man! I guess, mm-hmm, Lady Lefifi is okay... But other women are a no-no!”

“No, hang on, you’ve got it all wrong, Miss Iluna. I think there’s some kind of misunderstanding here.”

“I’m not wrong! I understand everything perfectly! Because, you know, Lady Lefifi taught me that’s what maid ladies are for!”

The maids she was referring to were the newcomers. We’d settled on that being their role after our discussion not long ago.

“Did she now? Your Majesty, would you please enlighten me on what kind of

‘lessons’ you’ve been giving Miss Iluna?”

“Oh? You mean to tell me maidservants do not also serve as concubines?”

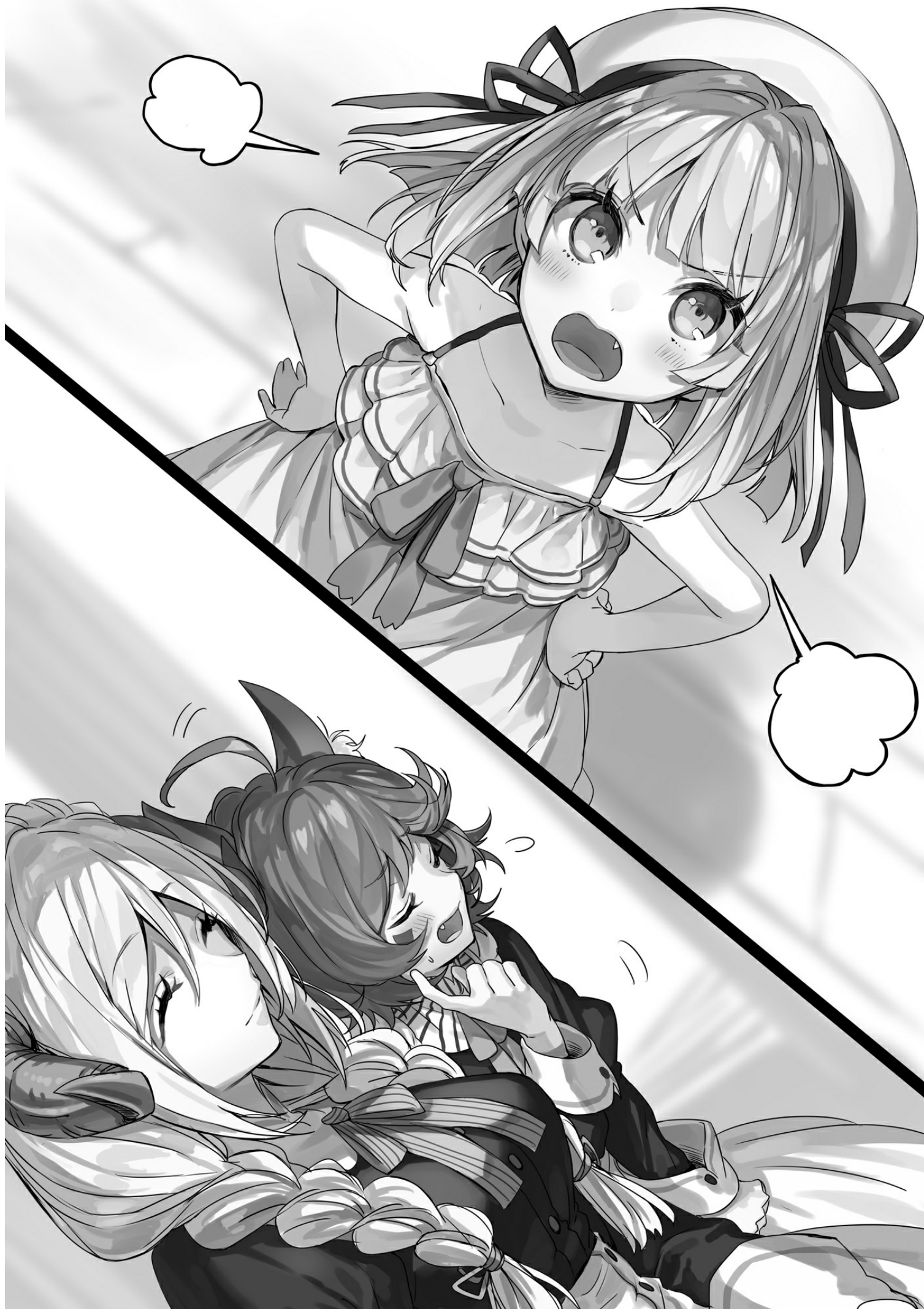
Butter my butt and call me a biscuit cuz Lefi’s no help. She actually believes what she’s saying!

“No, they damn well don’t! That’s just an awful misconception. It’s something you made up based on your biased values.”

“I-It’s all right, my lord. I’m not sure if I’ll be any good at pleasing you, especially with this thin body, but I-I’ll be sure to try my best! Not only did you save me, but you’re also letting me support Lord Fluffrir, so I’ll give it my all!”

“Hello? Did you hear what I just said? Is *anyone* listening to *anything* I’m saying? I literally *just* said that that’s not what maids are for,” I fired back at Lewin, the girl with the dog ears, after she gave her little speech while squirming and blushing in embarrassment. Leila, the girl with the sheep horns, had been watching us with an amused smile this whole time.

I unconsciously let out a big, heavy sigh. This was going to be a long day.



“Anyway, like I said before, I want you both to be maids here. I’ve been taking care of all the chores by myself, and it’s kinda been a huge pain in the ass.”

After what felt like forever, I’d finally managed to convince Iluna that the new girls weren’t mistresses or anything like that, and boy was it nice to have that misunderstanding all cleared up. Now, I was in the midst of explaining the inner workings of our little dungeon corporation to the two new hires. The current employee roster consisted of a demon lord, a Supreme Dragon, a little girl, and two pets. Our main responsibilities involved killing monsters, expanding the dungeon’s territory, lazing around, and playing house with the aforementioned little girl. Although, frankly speaking, the monster-killing didn’t really happen on a regular basis.

As a reminder, killing monsters in the dungeon’s territory brought in more DP than letting them just hang out did. I didn’t have to worry about DP unless it was an emergency, though, and it was all thanks to my golden goose-dragon, Lefi. On top of that, I was in a solid place as far as territorial expansion went, so I got to spend most of my time chilling.

Seeing as I had so much downtime, I’d been getting more things to help pass the time. Lefi and Iluna were especially fond of board games, and both of them were getting really good at remembering the rules for a bunch of them. I didn’t think life could get much better, except maybe if the new girls learned the games’ rules too. We’d have more opponents for our tabletop battles once they did, and the more the merrier, as they say.

Speaking of, those two had on proper maid uniforms instead of the slave rags they’d been wearing when they got here. And yes, I did mean *proper*. They were nothing like the frilly, cutesy dresses with the short hemlines you’d find in maid cafes in Akihabara. Nope, I’m talking classic, formal maid uniforms. Of course, I’d bought them from the DP Catalog, but to think it had even something like that on hand... *Mr. Catalog, you’re truly beyond redemption. I’m so here for it.*

As I continued my presentation on the dungeon, Leila raised her hand to ask me something.

“Sir, regarding nightly servi—”

“Unnecessary,” I answered without letting her finish her question.

Damn, lady, what are you thinking?! Don't ask me that! Cut me some slack, would ya? We've got a little kid here too, for crying out loud. Besides, I'm a healthy young man; if you tempt me with that body of yours, there's a zero percent chance my pants don't get a whole lot tighter.

I coughed exaggeratedly to get us as far away from that topic as possible.

“Lastly,” I said once the dramatics were done, “I’m sure there are a lot of things here you’re unfamiliar with, so you can ask me how to use them anytime. Your rooms will be the ones I showed you yesterday. Any other questions?”

I’d added their bedrooms to the dungeon last night after we’d all settled in. Lefi, Iluna, and I slept next to each other in our futons in one part of the throne room, but I didn’t think that would fly if we bumped it up to five people. It would have gotten really cramped, and I was sure the new girls would have felt uncomfortable in that situation.

Oh, I’d taken the chance to ask Lefi and Iluna if they wanted their own rooms too, but they said they didn’t need them, so I didn’t add any for them. I did plan on doing a complete remodel of the dungeon pretty soon, though, so I figured I’d build their rooms in the process whether they wanted me to or not. And besides, I wanted *my* own space.

“What’s this, my lord?”

“You use that to write stuff. If you click down on that top part a few times, a thin black thing will come out the other end. Then you can write with it.”

“Woow! What a useful magical tool!”

Yeah, it's useful, but it definitely ain't magical. It's just something from my old life.

“Master, what might this be?”

“That’s just a toy. You use it by— Actually, that’s one of Lefi’s favorites, so she’ll probably show you how it works. If she ever gets out of bed, that is.”

I glanced casually to the side, where Lefi had snuggled back into her futon after eating even though she’d literally just been awake a few minutes ago.

Whatever, it was no biggie. She'd worked her ass off yesterday, so I'd keep my mouth shut for now. But *only* for now.

"Hey, so, question for ya. What do other members of the demon species—y'know, people like you—think of demon lords?" I asked Leila as soon as the thought popped into my head.

"Hmm, well... Certainly, humans designate any lord or high-ranking individual of the demon species as a 'demon lord,' but for us demons, a demon lord is specifically one who is the lord of a labyrinth—those who have been transformed into another race by the labyrinth itself."

Labyrinth *had* to mean dungeon.

"Transformed?"

"Yes, indeed. Hm, how can I explain it? Essentially, they've been changed into something else entirely. For example, if a goblin becomes the lord of a labyrinth, it would then possess powers far beyond those of any goblin. Once that transformation to demon lord occurs, the foundation of its existence is no longer that of a goblin and is instead subverted by the demon lord classification. You could say that goblin is part of a 'new' race of goblin demon lords. That's the best way I can describe it."

Mm, okay. I think I get it now. So basically, I am what I am now because the power inherent to the demon lord class is coursing through my archdemon race body. Which means I was right to suspect that my power comes from me being a demon lord.

"You're a walking encyclopedia, Leila. I'll probably end up asking you about all kinds of stuff whenever from now on."

I knew I would. There were still tons of gaps in my knowledge about this world, so I was glad to have someone I could go to for help. Of course, there *was* Lefi, who *technically* knew a bunch of things like that...but unfortunately for me, that information was all skewed by her dragon perspective.

"I'm glad I was able to assist you, sir."

"Okay, going back to our original discussion, just ask me if you have any questions or concerns. Glad to have you on board, and I hope we can all get

along.”

Obviously experienced with etiquette, Leila bowed her head respectfully toward me. After a slight delay, the clearly inexperienced Lewin did the same. And with that, my dungeon corp welcomed its two newest employees.



On a certain day, sometime after the number of residents in my dungeon had increased, I was ready to really get going on my dungeon remodeling plans. I’d been putting it off for a while seeing as the only invader to ever make its way to this cave-deep dungeon had been the Cerberus, but it was high time I spruced the place up.

I wasn’t going to turn it into one of those crazy, multilevel dungeons like all those RPGs have, of course. No, my ultimate goal was a demon lord’s castle, the kind a game’s final boss would live in. Something spectacular, like the fortress in Amor Londo I mentioned a while back. Okay, obviously that would be a little overkill, but a man had to dream big, ya feel? Go big or go home. So today, I wanted to start on smaller renovations in preparation for that castle. With that thought in mind, I opened the interface and pulled up my stats to check my DP, which was when I noticed something interesting.

“Huh... Another weird title.”

Name: Yuki

Race: Archdemon

Class: Demon Lord

Level: 35

HP: 2,610 / 2,610

MP: 7,271 / 7,271

Strength: 733

Stamina: 761

Agility: 670

Magic: 1,012

Dexterity: 1,327

Luck: 72

Ability Points: 6

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot, Flight

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 7, Unarmed Combat 4, Elemental Magic 4, Stealth 5, Scout 4, Swordsmanship 2, Weapon Enhancement 3, Sorcerer's Grant 2

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World, The Supreme Dragon's Owner, The Adjudicator

Dungeon Points (DP): 152,400

The Adjudicator: Loathes sin and confers judgment upon wrongdoers. When confronting any persons who hold titles related to crime, all of The Adjudicator's stats are increased by a multiplier of 1.5.

Eh, sounds useful, so it's fine. But how the hell are titles even decided on?

"Hey, Lefi, how do people get titles?"

Lefi was in the middle of an intense practice round of Old Maid, which she was somehow playing by herself. That's actually a really funny story. See, she'd proudly explained the rules of the card game to Lewin, one of the new girls, and then swiftly got her ass handed to her. Lew getting that good that quick lit a fire in the dragon girl, and now here she was trying to get better at it. *Poor, naive Miss Lefi. Old Maid isn't exactly a one-player game, but you do you.*

"Hm? Ah, titles. That is the only thing which I myself do not know either. In most cases, a major event warrants the creation of a title, although strangely enough, there are those with seemingly no rhyme or reason to their titles. Some believe the gods observe our actions and bestow titles accordingly, but whether that is true or not, they are given to us by those we cannot perceive. In

essence, the only way to recognize a title is after it has already been conferred.”

Her response was way more thought-provoking than I’d expected.

“So, wait, do gods exist or not?”

“You speak of religion, yes? If so, I myself have never witnessed a god.”

Interesting. I’d just assumed that gods were actual living beings in this world on the basis of, well, being in another world. But if even Lefi had never seen them then even if they did exist, they were probably invisible presences just like gods back on Earth were.

“That reminds me. Lefi, you only have the one title?”

“No. I have countless others, but I choose to conceal them. The only reason you are able to even see ‘Conqueror of Dragonkind’ is because I will it so. It is the only one I need so that any who look upon my visage know at once what I am. Should the need arise, I am capable of making it so that none of my attributes, from my name to my titles, are visible.”

Ohhh, I see where she’s going with this. Having only that one title visible was more than enough to keep all the cowards and weaklings off her back. It was her way of living the life she wanted. In any case, it sounded like a person could mess around with their stats, at least in terms of visibility to others. Since there was an ability that let you view others’ stats, I could easily imagine an ability that did the opposite and let you hide your own stats. I’d have to browse through the Abilities section of the Catalog again and look for something like that.

This new info also gave me a possible clue as to how Iluna had managed to escape the kidnappers on her own. The odds that she had a similar kind of invisible ability seemed pretty high. Not that I ever planned on asking her about it, though. If she couldn’t even tell us about it, then it must be some sort of extraordinary secret, and she was entitled to her privacy. It’d be insensitive of me to pry into what was clearly none of my business.

“Hm? Why do you look so despondent?”

“Ah, well, one of my goals was to get good enough to be able to see all your stats. But now I know that you can hide them if you want to, so it’s kind of a

bummer, I guess?”

In other words, I was at her mercy in more ways than one.

“Heh heh heh. Is that so? Then you must continue to strive to improve all the more, must you not? By the time your strength matches my own, I believe you should be able to see half or possibly even more of my stats,” Lefi said with a cheerful grin on her face.

“When my strength matches your own? That’ll take centuries! I’ll be six feet under *way* before that happens.”

“Nonsense, Yuki. In all likelihood, you do not have a predetermined lifespan.”

“I... What?!” I yelled back kinda hysterically. I mean, how else was I supposed to feel hearing that kind of info? And she said it so casually too!

“Perhaps I should be clearer. I am quite sure you will live for at least a thousand, if not two thousand years. We spoke when we first met about how naturally created demons such as yourself are composed of mana itself, yes?”

“Uh, y-yeah, we did, but...”

I *did* remember her first lesson on how the essence of my dungeon was the power to create a dungeon master, aka a demon lord, and that I was born from the mana that gathered there.

“Demons with bodies formed of mana live for an extraordinarily long time. With just the simple act of breathing, they are able to absorb all necessary elements for continued survival. Even if they are to lose an arm, it will naturally regenerate as time passes—in proportion to their power, of course. So as long as mana exists in this world, natural demons such as yourself do not die, with the exception of those who are killed by others. Answer me this: you have no intrinsic need to ingest food, do you?”

You know, I have wondered from time to time why I haven’t really gotten hungry ever since I woke up as a demon lord. Does this mean my body is basically the same as my dungeon monsters’? It’s just like Shii’s and Rir’s? No. Fucking. Way.

Talk about a freaking plot twist. I was pretty much immortal and I didn’t know

it until now. Absolutely batshit insane, but also crazy cool.

“Th-Then what about you? You’ve been alive a damn long time now.”

I was still reeling from shock at the change in my reality, but I managed to toss that question out to Lefi.

“Me? Well, the dragon race has been blessed with long life since creation. My own body has become deeply attuned to mana as a result of my outsized power. The only ways death could now claim me are if all my strength were stripped away or if all the mana in this world were to disappear.”

“Gotcha. That’s fine by me. I don’t mind living forever as long as you’re around too. At least I know I won’t be bored with you by my si— Uh, Lefi? What’s wrong? Your face is all red.”

“I-It is nothing! Do not concern yourself with such a trivial matter! In any case, there must be a reason you asked about titles. You must have a new one, then — ‘The Supreme Dragon’s Owner’?! What nerve!”

“You *just* noticed, huh?”

“Y-Y-Yuki! How dare you treat me like I am a pet?! Your impudence knows no bounds!”

Boom, just like I knew was gonna happen when I first saw that title. Word for word, even. Am I good or am I good?

“Hey, c’mon, don’t worry about something like that. It’s just a title given to us by something we can’t perceive, right? So we could call it an objective fact of life.” I smirked at Lefi, and she growled ferally at me in response. “Now that you understand, how about begging for a treat like a real pet would? You could bark like a dog. That’ll do it for me.”

“I *will* make you suffer for your insolence, Yuki! I hereby challenge you to a duel! Face me in battle so that I may crush you!”

“Mwa ha ha ha ha! As you wish! If I win, I’ll make you grovel like a dog! And lick my feet like one too!”

“Y-Yuki, you... So you *do* possess that sort of inclination—”

“Oh, so *now* you’re calm?! Goddamn, woman, your mood swings are giving

me whiplash!”

My stupid brain couldn't think of anything else to say. Not after she'd gone from wrathful screeching to shocked disgust in the blink of an eye like that.

Lefi stomped off to bed after I creamed her in a game of cards. I'd used some extremely cheap and immature tactics, but I didn't care. I wanted to win, and I made it happen. With that out of the way, I could refocus on today's original goal of dungeon renovation, so I exited the throne room into the cave. First order of business was adding a level.

“All righty, what to choose, what to choose?”

I scrolled through the options on the interface as it hung in midair. For this level, I'd go with...a meadow. You heard that right, folks, with the dungeon's mysterious power, I could add an entire goddamn meadow to my dungeon. Conceptually, I imagined turning a basic field into a grassy meadow and then adding various options to further enhance it. I shelled out a good chunk of DP and voila, I'd added a meadow between the throne room and the cave.

“Whooooa... It's really a meadow.”

A few steps “out” of the cave, even though technically I was still *in* the cave, and there was the meadow. *Folks, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas—I mean, the dungeon anymore.*

How'd I get there? The door. Which door? The door in the cave. It looked like any other door, but when I turned the knob and pushed it open, in front of me lay the vast meadow. Again, despite still being inside the cave, an endless sky stretched overhead and the sun shone brightly on the lush greenery everywhere. A gentle breeze blew from time to time, rustling through the grass and stroking my cheeks. Within the calm landscape, off in the distance was another door, which I assumed connected directly to the throne room.

I said it before and I'll say it again: the dungeon's power really is a mystery. But I'm freaking here for it. The door was especially conspicuous standing like it did on the perfectly flat plain of the meadow. Curious to confirm my suspicion, I headed toward it, and when I went inside, I was back in the throne room. With a glance at Iluna and the newbies, who were staring at me curiously, I went

back into the meadow. From there, I walked around the door to see what was on the other side, but it was just the door itself. There was nothing else there.

I probably looked like a chimpanzee discovering itself in a mirror for the first time, and frankly, that was exactly how I felt. I wondered how far the meadow stretched, especially because it looked like a new world contained within itself. Hoping to find out, I walked and flew around the level for a while, and lo and behold, I learned that it did have boundaries. They were invisible walls like what you'd find in video games, and just like in those games, I couldn't go beyond them. In terms of width, if I imagined the door to the throne room right at the center of the meadow, the area had a five-kilometer radius. Height-wise, it was about a kilometer to the limit, which I discovered by accidentally smacking my head against it. It didn't hurt, but it sure surprised me.

Nice. It's a lot bigger than I thought. And it turned out I could make it even bigger if I wanted to. I'd do just that if it ever started feeling too small. Next, though, I wanted to add a bunch of different stuff to it, so I called up the display again. *What would jazz this place up? It's too boring with just the grass. A river and some mountains in the backdrop might be nice. Oh, and a bridge would be perfect for the river. I want cherry blossom trees too. I love cherry blossom trees.*

Looking at the view I'd created made me want a Japanese-style house now. *Hey, the Catalog has that exact type of inn. Consider yourself added! But wait, can't have an inn without a hot spring. I know there are all kinds of hot springs in here, so let's get a huge open-air bath going. I want a garden too—one with a pond. And I might as well drop a few koi in there. Don't know why the Catalog classifies them as monsters, but whatever—*

I'd situated the inn by the riverbank. It was designed in the classical Japanese style on the inside, which made me feel kinda nostalgic. From the engawa—the hallway around the outside of traditional Japanese-style buildings—you could see the pond and a single, beautiful cherry blossom tree. The whole space was meant to calm your heart. Plus, when you looked over the meadow itself, you could catch a glimpse of the majestic mountains in the distance.

"Yeah, okay. Not bad. Not bad at all."

All of a sudden, it hit me that I'd just built a hot spring inn so incredible that I almost wanted to say it was better than any of the ones on Earth. It was warm and relaxing, which was completely different from what I'd originally intended, but that was fine. I planned on building my demon lord castle somewhere else, so having a place like this was a-okay.

That's right, because I'm a creative demon lord. I was just trying my hand at building a place that would put everyone at ease. It wasn't like I'd gotten completely carried away with adding elements here, there, and everywhere, then ended up with this design before I even realized what I'd done. Nope, I totally hadn't spent insane amounts of DP producing all this. That wasn't what happened at all. Like, at *all*. Everything here was something I planned to put here all along. *Yup, all according to plan, including this inn. It represents a new step in my Way of the Demon Lord, a stepping stone toward my greater ambition. Bwa ha ha ha!*

Yeah, I had no clue what I was talking about either.

"Master, lunch is read— Oh, wow! Wh-Where are we?! Isn't this supposed to be the cave?! And there's a house here too?!"

Her face peeking through the door that connected to the throne room, Lewin couldn't contain the astonishment in her voice as she called out to me. By the way, that connecting door was right next to the inn. I'd built the inn there specifically so that it had easy access to the throne room. You'd think that adding a level like this would make it difficult to exit the cave, but that actually wasn't the case.

After testing a bunch of things in here, I learned that adding this level to the dungeon gave the door an interesting new feature. When you turned the knob, the location on the other side would change depending on where you wanted to go, Yowl's Moving Castle-style. I could jump straight from the throne room to the cave with the twist of a doorknob.

There was an exception to the feature, though—only those the dungeon recognized as its own could operate it. That meant me and Iluna, so if Lefi and the newbs wanted to head directly into the cave instead, one of us would have to turn the doorknob to make it happen. *Kind of annoying, but it is what it is.*

“Oh, hey, Lew. Lunch is ready? I’ll be right there.”

I was super grateful that I didn’t have to cook anymore. Since Leila and Lew had decided to stay on, Leila now had complete, exclusive control over the kitchen. She was so skilled at cooking that she’d picked up on my Earth recipes just by watching me cook in her early days here. Because of that, I was fully convinced that cooking belonged in the women’s domain given how much better at it they were. As for Lew... Well, she did her best, and that was good enough for me.

“But, ummm... M-My lord, aren’t you going to explain what’s going on here?!”

“Huh? Oh, yeah, sure. Let’s call it the demon lord’s mysterious power and leave it at that.”

“Sorry, my lord, but I don’t understand at all.”

Yeah, that’s fair.

“All right, I’ll be straight with you—I don’t know how I can do all this either. I just do it because I can. That’s honestly all I’ve got. Anyway, Lew, are you used to life here yet?”

I deliberately dodged the issue by asking her that, seeing as I couldn’t explain my power myself.

“Oh, yes, I guess I am... Although it’s kind of a strange feeling, you know? When I was a slave, all I could think was that my life was over, but now I’m here working like this.”

“Ha ha, well, life is all about strange events, huh?”

I get you. I ended up in another world entirely.

“But I’m super glad I came here. The food is delicious, my room is gorgeous, and there are so many interesting things! And on top of all that, Lord Fluffrir is here! Oh, yeah, my lord, when will Lord Fluffrir come back?!”

“Uhhh, hmm... I can’t say for sure. He’s like a phantom. Does his own thing, that one.”

“My lord? Why are you suddenly speaking so stiffly?”

Damn, she got me. Rir found Lew hard to handle, but I obviously wasn't going to tell her that. Though I guess some of that feeling slipped through when I awkwardly tried to gloss over the situation. I didn't think he'd come visit unless I invited him, but again, I couldn't tell her that.

"You two had better hurry! The food is beginning to get col— Good grief, a meadow?! What in the world...? Yuki, I see that you have done something peculiar again."

"Don't be rude, Lefi. I'll have you know that this is a huge step toward our dungeon's prosperity."

"Yes, yes, as you wish it, so it shall be. I care not either way. I demand you two return at once, else we here will devour all of the food."

"You will, will you?"

Lew and I both said that super sarcastically, but we still obeyed Lefi's command and headed back to the throne room.



"Mmm..."

That was the sound I made as I sank deep into the hot water of my new inn's hot spring. I'd wanted to test it out, and what a great decision that was because it felt amazing. The bathtub was made out of Japanese cypress and was big enough for two people to stretch out comfortably. There was no roof over this part of the inn, so when I looked up, I could see the moon shining and the stars glistening in the night sky. The lamplight was dim, letting that same starry sky reflect on the surface of the water.

The time here was set to match the time outside, so the sun blazed in the morning and the moon and stars sparkled at night. When I first created this level, I'd considered making it permanently nighttime, but the more I thought about it, the less convenient it seemed. Instead, I made sure the days passed the same way they would anywhere else.

"This really is the best, Shii," I said to the slime floating lightly in the water with me.

Shii apparently loved taking baths, to the point that it would barge in on me whenever I took one. At first, I'd worried that the water might make it swell up, but that didn't end up happening. Instead, every time it got out of the hot water, its body looked even shinier than usual. The little scamp was totally the type who always felt rejuvenated after a visit to the local watering hole, it was just a little more literal in this case.

"Yukiki!"

The sliding door to the bathing area opened with a clatter and our dungeon's resident little girl entered.

"You're here already, Iluna? I told you to come later."

"Hee hee, soooorry!" she replied with a big grin.

Ah, jeez. Yukiki can't be mad when you smile like that.

"Yukiki, wash my hair!"

"All right, sure. Go ahead and sit down over there."

"Yaaay!"

I got out of the tub and walked toward Iluna, who had sat herself down on a bathing stool. I put a second bathing stool right behind hers and sat on that one.

"Hee hee."

"Someone's in a good mood today," I said while I washed Iluna's hair. She nodded happily in agreement.

"Uh-huh! 'Cause it's been foreeeever since it's been just the two of us, Yukiki!"

Huh. She's right. I haven't been spending a whole lot of time with her lately; I'll have to fix that. Maybe we could play in the meadow or something? Ooh, wait, a picnic would be fun. Everyone in the dungeon can come, and we'll spend the whole day relaxing to the max. Yup, we're totally doing this. We're having a picnic, and we're having it soon. Good idea, me. I can't wait.

The door slid open again while I was busy brainstorming and washing Iluna's hair.

“Oh, Iluna, I see you are here as well.”

“Lady Lefifi!”

“Oh, hey, Lefi. Wait, Lefi?!”

“Hm? Why are you wearing such a dimwitted expression, Yuki?”

In case it wasn’t obvious, Lefi was the next one to show up in the bath.

“Wh-Why are you in here too?”

“Am I not permitted to enter?”

“N-No, you are, but...”

Having Iluna here wasn’t a big deal because she was still so young, but Lefi was a completely different story. Let’s just say it felt too dicey because her human body was right on the verge of womanhood. We’ll leave it at that. *Give me a break, will you?*

“Because, because Lady Lefifi wants to be with Yukiki too, right?!”

“W-Wrong! Ahem... Yuki, I felt the need to command you to wash my hair, as quite some time has passed since you last did so. I do very much enjoy the sensation.”

“O-Oh, yeah? Um, then, Iluna, how about you get in the tub now?”

“Okaaay!” she replied energetically now that I’d finished washing her hair, then got into the tub with a loud *splash*.

With the stool freed up, Lefi took a seat on it. Her beautiful, milk-pale nape burst into view from in between her silver hair. That was more than enough to suck me in, and I moved my eyes from her neck down to her rounded shoulders, then to her slim, feminine back with the naturally feminine dip in the waist. I didn’t stop there, looking even further down until I saw her cute, firm butt. Her dragon tail grew from slightly above it; it waved from side to side, tickling my legs.

Stop. Don’t think about it. Empty your mind. I didn’t want to tip Lefi off to my, uh, *agitation*, so I took a quiet but deep breath to keep my heart from slamming out of my chest. Once I’d calmed down a little, I wet her hair with the shower

head, sudsed up my hands with shampoo, and started gently washing her hair. I slid my fingers lightly through the fine strands first, then moved on to the horns growing out of her head.

“Nnh...” Lefi moaned every so often. The sounds she made were oddly seductive, throwing my mind into chaos.

Stop. Thinking. You are the void. Calm your ass down. There’s absolutely no reason to feel like this. It’s Lefi, for God’s sake.

“A-All right, Lefi, I’m done.”

I let out a sigh of relief as I finished rinsing the last of the foam out of her hair. But as I did, for reasons that will forever remain a mystery to me, the silver-haired girl slumped backward to lean on me. My heart started pounding insanely hard now that I could feel her body heat directly on my skin.

“Wait, what the—”

“Ahhh, Yuki, that was wonderful. Yet your labored breathing concerns me. Is something the matter, perhaps? Might you be captivated by my nude form?”

She peered up at me with a smirk on her face. *Sh-She fucking knew this whole time!*

“Y-Yeah right! As if! You’ve got one hell of an ego, Lefi. Do you really think I’d get excited by your childish body?”

“Ch-Childish body?! You have some nerve to say that when you were breathing so heavily!”

“Th-The hell I was! I had a stuffy nose, so of course I was breathing hard! That’s all it was!”

“What kind of excuse is that?!”

“Yukiki, Lady Lefifi, the water’s gonna get cold if you don’t hurry up already!”

Neither of us could argue with the little girl’s scolding, so we didn’t. We both just stood up in silence, headed to the bathtub, and slid our bodies into the water.

“Ahhh... How sublime... Never would I have thought that hot water could feel

so wonderful...”

“Yup, it feels sooo good! Right, Shii?!”

Shii bobbed in the water, agreeing with the sentiment.

“I’m glad to hear it.”



For a while after that, we relaxed in peace and quiet. It wasn't a bad feeling by any means. I wasn't old enough to have kids, obviously, but this was probably how actual fathers felt.

"Tell me, Yuki, what motivated you to create this place so suddenly? The view is certainly lovely, but nevertheless, I am curious," Lefi said while gazing out at the meadow.

"Weeeell, I want to make a castle."

"What?"

"You heard me—a castle. This meadow is the first step."

"So, for the sake of argument, let us say that is possible. I still do not understand the need for a hot spring or an inn."

"I built them before I realized what I was doing."

"I-Indeed...?" she replied, but she totally didn't get it. Oh well.

A good chunk of time had passed since we'd gotten into the nice, hot water. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see something swaying and bobbing.

"Iluna?"

It was Iluna, obviously sleepy from the comforting warmth. I didn't even notice she'd dozed off until just now when her wobbling body entered my line of sight.

"Oh, dang, you're really falling asleep. Come on, Iluna, hang in there a little longer so we can make it to your futon."

"Ngh..."

I held her hand as she rubbed her eyes sleepily with the other.

"Sorry, Lefi, can you help me get her dressed?"

"Hm, I shall."

"Shii... H-Hey, Shii, you okay? You're—"

Shii's body was stretched out so far that it no longer had any kind of form. From my perspective, I found its seemingly melted state seriously concerning,

but Shii itself didn't look worried at all. It jiggled its body, basically saying, "I'll get out in a little while, so don't worry!"

"Roger... Just don't overdo it," I said to Shii with a wry smile, then stood up in the tub with Lefi and Iluna. Nestled close together, the pale glow of the moon lit our way back to the dungeon.



As soon as she entered the room Yuki had created for the newcomers, Lew, still in her maid uniform, sprawled out on top of the bed she'd been given.

"Ughhh... So tired... Lady Lefi always gets angry at the drop of a hat."

"Lew, your uniform is going to get wrinkled if you do that," Leila, who'd returned to their room earlier, responded chidingly to Lew's actions.

"Hm, yeah, that's true."

Heeding her colleague's warning, Lew dragged herself up, then smoothly started taking off each part of her maid uniform. Her supple, womanly curves were revealed as she undressed, though they weren't particularly voluptuous because of her delicate frame.

The various nonhuman species—demons, therianthropes, and demi-humans—had small amounts of discord between one another, but at present, relations between the three species were relatively good. This was a result of the fact that humans persecuted all three groups indiscriminately as heretical "failed human" abominations. As such, if the nonhuman species turned against each other, the likelihood was high that they'd all be annihilated by the humans.

Elves, the people of the woods, were the only ones who were safe, and that was only because of their Secret Art of the Forest ability. The humans knew that if they recklessly tried to attack the elves, they would be retaliated against ferociously with that ability, and thus a treaty of mutual noninterference existed between the two races. All others were subject to the humans' insatiable lust for conquest, leading to the current state of affairs wherein humans had been at war with the three species for more than a hundred years. In short, the situation was dire.

Each individual demon, therianthrope, and demi-human possessed both

physical and magical power beyond those of a human, but they were unfortunately overwhelmed by the humans' numbers advantage. Outnumbered ten-to-one, the nonhuman species often ended up on the losing side of any squabbles that occurred. For decades now, on top of advancing their various technologies, humans had been steadily gaining an advantage on the front lines, forcing the nonhumans into an untenable position. Or so Lew had heard from her elders when she was growing up. That was why, given the current situation, those sharing similar circumstances had to join forces whether they liked it or not. In this case, being on good terms with each other was a necessity, not a luxury.

"Oh, hey, Leila? I know it's a little late to be asking you this, but why'd you decide to stay here?"

"Hm? Well, to repay my debt—"

"I know that's just a facade, Leila," Lew said, eyeing Leila in disgust as she put on the cute pajamas her lord had given her. "I mean, you're part of the ovine race."

Due to the variety of races—and tribes within those races—in the demon and therianthrope species, there existed a custom among these people to add their clan or tribe name after their given names. These additional names made it easier for individuals to identify themselves by the communities and families they were a part of. In Lew's case, she belonged to the Groll clan.

However, despite this tradition, Leila hadn't mentioned her last name when they'd first introduced themselves. That was entirely because only one tribe of ovine people existed. It was a matriarchal clan, and they had the unique characteristic of being scholars.

All members of that well-known family overflowed with curiosity, to the point that they'd forget to sleep and eat when they immersed themselves in studying whatever attracted their interest. They were famous among the demon species for their behavior, but their existence was even common knowledge within a few beast tribes, as evidenced by the fact that Lew knew a lot about them. It seemed to her, however, that their lord didn't know any of this information.

"Well, I truly am grateful he saved me, you know? Even I'd wanted to give up

on life after being forced into slavery. But then I met the master, and he was so different from so many other demon lords—those who lacked brains and were intoxicated by power. Here was a man with intelligence and reason. I thought it would be a waste not to take the chance to pursue knowledge about this labyrinth and, by extension, its demon lord.”

“O-Oh, okay.” Seeing the usually nonchalant Leila come to life while she spoke, her eyes brimming with enthusiasm and fists clenched in excitement, Lew smiled wryly on the inside. She thought, *Yup, this girl’s definitely part of the ovine family.* “So, what have you learned about him so far?”

“Hm, all I know is that the master has a mysterious power and that he’s an interesting person. Oh, and that he cares deeply for his little sister and Lady Lefi.”

“Weeell... Yeah, I’d say you’re right about all that.”

If Lew were to describe their master, it would be with the word “mysterious.” He made masterful use of tools she’d never seen nor heard of and cast magic on a massive scale without breaking a sweat, but sometimes lacked information about the world so basic that even beast children knew it.

Happiness, anger, sadness—with his innocent, childlike personality, he expressed his emotions readily. Well, he usually behaved like that whenever he did something silly, which happened a lot, now that Lew thought about it. Nonetheless, she found that refreshing about him.

On top of all that, for whatever reason, being near him felt like being near the sun; when they were together, it warmed her to her very core. They hadn’t even known each other for long, but Lew found that sense of security to be the most mysterious thing about him.

In any case, even if their master hadn’t been such a good one, she still liked being in the dungeon. No one nagged her endlessly, and though her job was that of a maid, it was little more than a title given the way she was able to do almost entirely as she pleased. She was often made to play games with her lord and the others a lot, but she enjoyed their time together, so that wasn’t an issue either. The only minor problem was constantly being challenged to matches by Lady Lefi, who had a deep hatred of losing.

The other amazing perks were the delicious meals, relaxing hot spring, and comfortable bed. Lew doubted there was another job with such great working conditions. Plus, Lord Fluffrir was here too. It was upsetting that she hadn't seen him recently, but it didn't matter, because he was the reason she'd decided to stick around in the first place. *I bet all my friends back home in the village would be so mad if I ever got the chance to brag about all this to them.*

"I'm pretty sure you don't have to hide any of that from His Lordship, though. I doubt he'd get mad."

"You're probably right, but I want to study the labyrinth and its master in their natural state, so I think it's best that I keep my research a secret."

Lew understood what she meant. Anyone would act differently if they found out they'd been under observation without their knowledge.

"And what about *you*, Lew? If I recall, the Groll clan is the head of the entire werewolf race, right? Also, I think I heard that the daughter of the head of the family ran away from home some time ago. You wouldn't happen to be that daughter...?"

"Eek! Th-That's a secret!"

Lew waved her hands in a panic, trying to shut Leila up.

"Heh heh, my lips are sealed. Buuut if you tell anyone about me, I might let a little something slip, you know?"

"O-Okay, I understand! I won't say anything about you, so you definitely can't talk about me either!"

Witnessing her coworker's unease, Leila asked her a question that had been sort of plaguing her.

"That reminds me, Lew. Why are you so desperate to hide the truth about yourself?"

"B-Because it's embarrassing! That someone so...so tactless and not womanly like me is the chief's daughter."

Leila chuckled unintentionally at Lew's fidgeting.

"Well, I think you're quite adorable and feminine, Lew."

“Wha— I-I’m not adorable...”

“That aside, tomorrow...isn’t an early start, but it would still be disrespectful to wake up after the master. We should sleep.”

With that, Leila reached out to turn off the lamp in their bedroom.

“Hey! You totally dodged the issue. But okay, good night.”

“A good night to you too!”



“Piiicnic, picniic!”

Iluna was in a fantastic mood. She had a huge smile on her face and was happily swinging the hand of mine that she was holding. She was always laughing and smiling, but today, her smile was a hundred times brighter. *What a cutie.*

“Iluna, calm yourself. Continue shaking our hands like that and I will swiftly lose the ability to hold on.”

Lefi was holding Iluna’s other hand, but Iluna was swinging that all over the place too, of course.

“I can’t help it, Lady Lefifi! ’Cause we’re going on a picnic! A picnic! A super-duper fun picnic!”

“While we are on the subject, what exactly does a ‘picnic’ entail? I still do not know, as I was awoken in quite the mad rush this morning,” Lefi said while yawning sleepily.

“Ummm, a picnic is... Yukiki!”

I laughed dryly at Iluna, who’d tagged me in to explain since she didn’t know either.

“Let’s see, how do I describe it...? On a picnic, you eat and have fun under the blue sky.”

As you could tell from our conversation and the girls’ reactions, we were having a picnic today. Usually, work wasn’t something I actually did much of, but it was important to cut loose like this every once in a while. I’d been putting

a little effort into stuff lately, so it was time to treat myself. I deserved it.

“You say ‘blue sky,’ but this particular sky is an imitation, is it not?”

“All right, sure, I guess you’re *technically* right. Let me rephrase that, then: a picnic is all about the vibe—the relaxing atmosphere. Better?”

“But, my lord, how do we have fun in this big meadow? It’s nothing but grass. I guess it’s perfect for a nap, though.”

Behind us walked the maids, casually carrying the basket with all our food, and Rir, carrying Shii on his back. It was the first time in a long time that Rir had come to see us. He was annoyed by a certain werewolf maid—she was the one who’d asked me that question, by the way—who never stopped trying to fawn over him. He tried valiantly to hide his irritation, but it seemed like she might have sensed it anyway because she looked kinda upset.

“Hm, a nap, you say? That sounds wonderful.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll all see what I’m talking about. I make no mistakes, thanks very much. Ah, here’s perfect.”

We stopped on a small hill that was next to a stream. I’d added these features to this part of the level a while ago, but I’d done it specifically for today. I sorta felt like I’d forgotten the original reason I’d even created this meadow, but maybe that was just my imagination.

Anyway, I took out the picnic blanket I’d stored in Inventory earlier and spread it out on the ground.

“I see! So this is where we’ll be eating, Master?”

“Sure is. Food’s not till later, though. We’re just dropping our stuff here because right now, we’re going sledding!”

The next thing I pulled out of the rift was a sled made of wood. It was big enough to hold two adults without any issues.

“Yukiki, how does it work?”

“Follow me, Iluna. I’ll teach you a new way to have fun.” I led Iluna to the top of the hill. When we got there, I put her in the front of the sled, then stood right behind it. “Okay, here we go!”

“Woow! So faaast!”

I started running, pushing the sled as hard as I could. Once it started moving fast enough, I jumped onto it, and the momentum picked up even more. We zoomed down the hill just like that, reaching the bottom where the others were in the blink of an eye.

“Wow, wow, wow! Yukiki, that was so much fun!”

“Right?! You can call me Fun Master Yuki from now on!”

“Fun Master Yukiki!”

“Bwa ha ha ha, don’t stop now with the praise!”

Well, the real stars were the folks who originally came up with this!

“Whoa! That looks like a lot of fun, my lord!”

“liinteresting. Entertainment that uses an incline. It seems quite amusing, despite its simplicity.”

Lew’s eyes sparkled with excitement while Leila studied the sled curiously.

“You two wanna hop on?”

“Yes, please!”

“I’d also like to try it at least once.”

This time, I took them up the hill and had them board the sled. Lew was in the front, with Leila behind her.

“Ummm, Leila, your chest is...”

“Sorry, I didn’t catch that. One more time?”

“Uh... No, never mind. I’d come off looking like a miserable wretch, so pretend you didn’t hear anything.”

“Okay...?”

Pressed against Leila’s ample chest, Lew wilted like a flower. She looked conflicted. I felt bad for her, and an unwitting thought crossed my mind. *It’s okay, Lew. A flat chest is a status symbol*, I thought to cheer her on.

“My lord? Why are you trying not to laugh?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. Okay, we have lift-off!”

“Wai— Hold— Gyaaah!”

“Oh my! Amazing! Simply amazing! We’re going so fast!”

I used all my demon lord strength to push the sled, shooting it off down the hill like a rocket. The girls’ shrieks echoed up to me as they reached the bottom.

“Whew... Th-That was faster than I thought... Or was it because my lord is just too strong...? Jeez, we were going so fast that I got scared and clenched my thighs without even realizing it...”

“That was incredible! Just what I’d expect from you, Master Demon Lord!”

I was back at the bottom with everyone. I didn’t exactly know what Leila meant by “just what I’d expect,” but I’d take the compliment. Then, I glanced at the one person who still hadn’t tried out the Demon Lord Coaster.

“All righty, who’s up next?”

“I... I will refrain.”

“Hey, now. None of that.”

I squatted down, stuck my head between Lefi’s legs, and stood up quickly so I could carry her on my shoulders.

“Gaaah! Wh-What is the meaning of this, Yuki?!”

“I just think it’s kinda sad to leave someone out of the fun and games.”

I squeezed her legs tightly with one arm so she couldn’t escape, dragging the sled up the hill with my other hand.

“Wai— I-I understand! I understand, so put me down at once, Yuki!”

“Heh. I have a special route planned for the Supreme Dragon. You better hold on tight, y’hear?”

Once we reached the top of the hill, I got on the sled. With Lefi still on my shoulders, we took off.

“Y-You must be joki— Eeeeeek!”

“Bwa ha ha ha!”

Since I couldn't push the sled myself, I was using wind magic to speed us up this time around. I'd been practicing it more lately and had finally managed to actually learn something. The minute we took off, I created a wind bomb of sorts behind the sled and set it off. The air pressure from the explosion launched us forward.

"Whaaat?! We are flying?! Did we— Were we not just flying for an instant?!"

"Hell yeah! This is the best! Let's go again!"

"I beg you to stop this!"

Lefi was barely breathing by the time we landed at the bottom of the hill.

"Grr, you miscreant... How dare you?!"

"Oh, come on, you go *way* faster than that when you're flying."

"That is a separate matter entirely!"

I'd be lying if I said I didn't get it. I had friends back in my old life who were totally fine with bungee jumping but would never skydive. Not being in control was scary, which was probably why Lefi was fine with flying but hated what we just did.

"Aww, don't be like that. I just wanted everyone to have fun is all. I certainly wouldn't have imagined that the great Supreme Dragon would be reduced to whimpers at something trivial like this."

I smirked at the feral, hateful expression on Lefi's face. But then it changed to a fearless smile as if she'd suddenly thought of something.

"So be it. Yuki, I have quite an interesting idea, so I would like to ride again. You will take me once more, yes?"

"Huh? Oh, no, I, uh, I think I've had enough for one day; someone else can have a turn—"

"Hey, now. None of that."

Throwing my words right back in my face, Lefi grabbed me from behind with both arms. *I-I can't break her hold! She's using her full dragon strength!*

"I'm happy you're holding me so passionately, but maybe you could save it for

when there aren't others around to watch us?"

"Perish the thought. We are comrades who have bathed together, so your timidity comes much too late."

Still holding me tightly, Lefi sprouted her wings and flew both me and the sled I was hanging onto to the top of the hill.

"Ugh... Fine, bring it! I love thrill rides! It doesn't matter how fast you go since this hill isn't super big or steep, but I'll still have my fun!"

"You are mistaken, Yuki. You will be sliding on this."

As she spoke, Lefi swung one arm to the side, and the ground started shaking loudly.

"Sweet baby cheezus, what?!"

The shaking stopped within a few seconds, and when it did, I saw an awe-inspiring ice course. It had twists and turns out the wazoo, a few loops, and a sudden drop. It was *literally* a roller coaster—it even had guard rails to keep the sled from falling off. Couldn't force the sled off the course either. She'd apparently thought of everything.

"Woow! That's amazing, Yukiki! You're gonna slide on that?!"

"Yikes... I could never do that."

"Wh-What incredible magic... And she created it so quickly..."

Thanks to my demon lord body, my enhanced hearing picked up the others' carefree voices from all the way at the bottom of the hill. *Ugh, I wish I could be down there too.*

"H-Hey, Lefi, don't you think you're getting too into this?! This doesn't even count as sledding anymore!"

"Well, Yuki, as you take such fine care of me, I thought it only right for you to enjoy this to your heart's content. Worry not. I shall do as you did and use wind magic for acceleration, so I am quite certain this will be faster than before."

"How the heck do you expect me not to worry after you tell me *that*?!"

"It is time, Yuki! Gird your loins!"

“Gird my— Whooooooaaaaa!”

“Gah ha ha ha ha! Savor the taste of my long-suppressed wrath!”

My screams and Lefi’s cackles echoed across the blue sky.

“Why so glum, Lefi? Mad that I didn’t get scared?”

“Grr... Your nerves of steel confound me, Yuki.”

The silver-haired dragon girl growled at me, frustrated. At first, the Dragon Coaster, which was ridiculously different from any of the man-made ones on Earth, had had me shaking in fear. But we’d both failed to account for me being an adrenaline junkie. Once I realized that “Hey, isn’t this actually extremely fun?” my screams changed from terror to joy.

“Heh. Something like that isn’t enough to scare me.”

“I do not want to hear that from someone who was trembling and pleading for release at the start,” Lefi replied with a scowl, her teeth clenched. She was clearly pissed off at my triumphant expression.

“Yukiki, Lady Lefifi, let’s eat! Pleeese?! I’m sooo hungry!”

“Sorry, that’s my bad. All right, Lefi, it’s lunchtime. Here, bon appétit!”

“Bon appétit,” echoed Lefi and Iluna.

“Thank you for the food,” said Leila.

“B-Bon appétit. Jeez, I’m still not used to that...” added Lew.

Even after waking up in this world, I still always said a quick thank-you before eating. I’d been the only one doing it for the longest time, but without me even noticing, it became a habit for everyone else too. It wasn’t a bad thing at all, obviously. Hopefully, the newbies would get used to it soon too.

“Woow! It’s fried birdie! So many fried birdies!”

After opening the picnic basket, Iluna squealed with joy. There was a whole bunch of her favorite food inside.

“Yes indeed. We’ve got plenty, so eat up.”

By the way, this particular fried “birdie” was a monster called “Rock Bird.” Its skin was covered in rock-hard feathers, and when it attacked, it would scream in a death growl like a heavy metal singer. And now you could say it was *rocking* our world by letting us eat it. The flavor itself was light, but thick juices oozed out when you bit into it, so all in all it was freaking delicious.

“Mm, yup. Monster meat is *the* best.”

“Oh, is that what this is? Which monster, my lord?”

“Rock Bird.”

“I see! Rock Bird, huh? Wait, Rock Bird?! But that’s a War-level monster! That’s one high-quality ingredient!”

Lew did a double take at me, the shock clear in her face as she spoke.

“‘War-level’?”

“That’s how we classify monsters! A single War-level monster is powerful enough to do damage equivalent to wartime casualties!”

Seemed that monsters had a danger classification system split into the categories of Harmless, Hazardous, Human, War, Disaster, Catastrophe, and Calamity. A War-level monster was strong enough to wreak the kind of havoc caused by wars—wars from this world’s perspective, though, where casualties only reached the hundreds instead of the tens of thousands there’d be on modern-day Earth.

“Huh, good to know. Rock Birds are definitely tough, but they usually go down with one strike of my greatsword. Plus, their meat is delicious, so I’ve only ever thought of them as easy game.”

“I think I finally understand just how completely absurd living here is. But this tastes incredible, so I don’t care.”

Lew looked amazed, impressed, and baffled all at the same time.

“Heh heh, you’re too naive, Lew. You’d be even more shocked if you knew what other ingredients we used,” Leila commented as she pointed to the rest of the food, which included sandwiches and rice balls.

Leila and I had shared cooking duties for today’s picnic, and she’d helped from

start to finish, so she knew everything that was in each of the dishes. I usually bought whatever ingredients I needed off the Catalog out of laziness, but I wanted today's meal to be special, so I went the extra mile and put in a little effort with my monster hunting.

"Um... I don't think I want to know. I'll just say that deliciousness is justice and let that be the end of it."

"What an intriguing frame of mind. 'Deliciousness is justice'... There seems to be a crucial component missing from your description of justice, however. Would you not agree, Yuki?"

"Damn, Lefi, one-track mind much? Yes, we made dessert too, so just chill until we get to it, jeez."

Since Leila had already known about dessert, she didn't respond. The other three, though, shrieked happily at the news.

"Yaaay! Desseeert!"

"My lord, the confections you make for us are always so scrumptious!"

"Indeed. I suspect that this is the only place in this whole world with such delicious foods. Be grateful, Lew."

"Uh, and why exactly are *you* bragging about that?"

"Clearly it is because I have consumed more of your treats than anyone else."

Huh. True, I guess.

"Yeah, all right. And I'm *super* thrilled to have the Supreme Dragon's approval."

"As you should be."

"Um, my lord? I've been curious about this for a while, but, uh, you keep calling Lady Lefi the Supreme Dragon. Does that mean she's...?"

"That she is. Did I not tell you? Supreme Dragon Lefi here is an ancient dragon."

"I had no idea... But wait, she's seriously *the* Supreme Dragon?!"

"Indeed I am. You find it so hard to believe?"

“N-No, I-I mean... The Supreme Dragon is a legend even among the powerful dragon race. But she’s so small. She has a weakness for sweets and gets angry whenever she loses a game too. She’s the total opposite of what I imagined...”

Ah, yeah, she sure doesn’t come as advertised, does she? No one would ever expect this thing stuffing her cheeks like a squirrel to be a terrifying ancient creature.

“Oh? If you have something you wish to say to me, Lew, I would hear it.”

“Eek! U-Um, L-Lady Lefi, you’re a lovely young girl, which is completely different from what I imagined! That’s what I meant!”

“Is that so? Then pray tell what you envisioned for the Supreme Dragon.”

“Uh— Um— Well— That— I—”

“Stop messing with her, dumbass.”

I gave Lefi a chop on the head for going too far with her little act.

“Owww... B-But, Lew—”

“No excuses. If you’re gonna complain, clean up your act first. *Then* you can go off on other people.”

Lefi shot me an angry look, which I responded to with one of my own.

“Th-Thanks for the save, my lord... Wait, Leila, you’re so calm. Did you know that Lady Lefi was the Supreme Dragon?”

“Well, yes. It’s well-known that the Supreme Dragon—Lady Lefi—carved out their territory deep in the Demonic Forest. I saw her commanding the dragons when we first met as well, so that was another clue for me. If anything, I’m surprised you *didn’t* realize it, Lew.”

“Th-That’s because, I don’t know, everything was happening so fast in the beginning that I didn’t know what was happening at all! And after meeting my lord, Lord Fluffrir captured my attention and I couldn’t think about anything else...”

Speaking of Rir, he was lying in the shade of a tree with Shii by his side. Shii was totally off in dreamland, but Rir definitely wasn’t. His eyes were closed, but

I could see him reacting to us with the occasional twitch. I think he was keeping still and holding back in general so he wouldn't disturb us. *What a great guy.*

"No more talking! Hurry up and eat so we can play! I wanna play bad-mitten-ton again!"

"Ooh, badminton. Sounds good to me. Let's play together after we finish eating, Iluna."

"Yup! I want to play with you, Yukiki!"

Her face lit up with another smile. *What a cutie.*

"By the way, my lord, your little sister is...?"

"Just a little girl."

"You know, that's surprising in its own way. A little girl spoiled by your demon lordship and the Supreme Dragon, Lady Lefi... I wonder if that makes her the most important person here."

Gotta agree with you on that one, Lew. Of the big four in our dungeon corp, Iluna stood at the top. Lefi came in second and Rir in third, with me, the weakest of the bunch, taking last place. Shii was a pet and the two newcomers were maids, so they weren't included in the hierarchy. If we were in a show, my line would probably be something like, "Hmph, I am the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Do not grow conceited just because you have defeated me..."

Nah, not a fan. That sounds like something you'd say when you're on the brink of death. I have no interest in dying, so consider that proposal rejected. That definitely needed some workshopping. "Hmph, I am the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. If you cannot even defeat me, then you are out of your depth," maybe? With that line, I'd turn the tables on any invading enemies and become the dungeon's shield.

"Heh. I am Demon Lord Yuki, feared as the shield of this dungeon."

"What's wrong, Yukiki?"

"Nothing."

After that, we spent the whole day enjoying the hell out of ourselves. Until

Iluna got tired of playing and fell asleep, at least.

Chapter 5: Defending a Dungeon

The Kingdom of Alisia. Situated on the northwestern part of the continent, it was one of the most distinguished and prosperous nations in the world. Its population vastly exceeded that of its neighbors, and its various industries—particularly in the field of magical tools—thrived. It held a technological advantage in the field compared to other countries, so anyone who purchased the latest magical equipment would most likely find that it was produced in Alisia. And of course, paralleling its development of magical technology was its advancement in military technology, placing it one step ahead of other nations. All of those factors combined to make Alisia a highly influential power in geopolitics.

Alisia's current king, Reyd Glorio Alisia, was a mediocre ruler. Despite that, however, he remained greatly esteemed for his strong governing policies, making him incredibly popular with the people.

"Now is the time to strike!" a young man shouted, stating his case before that very king. The man was his son, Lute Glorio Alisia. Lute's deep loyalty to his country was reflected in his serious nature, but that profound passion had begun to spin out of control.

"We cannot and we will not. We are forbidden from marching on that region."

"Then you mean to leave the situation as is in spite of our nation being invaded?!"

The king remained calm even in the face of the younger man's fury. Their discussion had been precipitated by an urgent report they'd received a few days ago. According to the report, the frontier town of Alfiro had been briefly occupied by a host of monsters.

"You may call it an invasion, but there was no serious damage done. I was told that the destruction of a criminal organization was the largest effect it had."

That was the precise reason the king maintained his composure despite the gravity of the situation. As far as he was concerned, the problem was solved—the town itself hadn't suffered grievous harm, and the criminals who had constantly committed imbecilic, dastardly deeds had been eliminated. On top of that, even if he considered retaliating, the opponent was far too wicked and powerful. But Lute was unsatisfied with that resolution, so he continued lashing out at his father.

“The degree of damage is irrelevant! What's vital is the fact that our nation was attacked!”

Lute was advocating for an aggressive defensive policy through invasion—essentially, “the best defense is a good offense.” He was of the opinion that some measure of violence was required from their nation before it was too late. It enraged him that his beloved country had been attacked by mindless monsters.

Lute's appeal also had an ulterior motive, and it concerned the Demonic Forest, where the monsters behind the attack hailed from. A vast amount of unspoiled nature existed within the Forest, and all of it remained unclaimed by the neighboring countries because of the region's dangerous disposition. In essence, a veritable treasure trove lay dormant there.

If they annexed that land, Lute knew for certain that the country would develop even further. His father the king, however, was extreme in his refusal to lay siege to it, and it was all because he feared the Supreme Dragon who may or may not even exist. Lute himself was quite aware of the powerful monsters that lived there, but their country's superior magical tools would make up for that disadvantage. The probability of victory was high.

And yet, because his father was a coward, Lute found it inconceivable to stand idly by and hamper the country's growth. “Foolish” was the only way he could describe that course of action, and to the crown prince, who only knew the Supreme Dragon as a distant legend, foolish was how he viewed his father.

“You still do not understand what sort of place that is.”

“It's a dangerous, unexplored region with powerful monsters, yes?! Even I know that much!”

Reyd sighed despondently at Lute's persistent stubbornness. The disappointment was clear in his eyes as he gazed at his obstinate blockhead of a son. Lute loathed that look.

"In any case, we will not make any moves against the Forest. I forbid you from acting on your own. This is a royal decree, so heed me well."

"Gh... Understood. I'll take my leave, then."

Not bothering to conceal his aggravation, the crown prince briskly strode out of the room and into the beautifully decorated hallway outside. There, a man quietly approached him.

"What are your thoughts on this matter, Prince Lute? I find the king's decree somewhat severe."

"The king...knows nothing. I'll make sure it stays that way."

"Then you're forging ahead with the plan?"

"Yes. Gather the troops."

"Understood, Your Highness. As you will it, so it shall be..."

With those words, the man left Lute's side. The prince stood alone now, a dangerous determination flickering in his eyes.

The hard sound of feet treading the earth was accompanied by the echo of metal clinking. A troop of armor-clad soldiers on a long journey marched in an orderly fashion. Mustered on behalf of the prince, these men had been recruited for a military expedition, and while they were cohesive in small groups, the formation as a whole seemed fragmented. But there was a good reason for that.

During secret discussions with the prince, greedy nobles dazzled by the prospect of untold riches in newly claimed land had agreed to lend him their armies, so almost all of the soldiers came from different commands. Furthermore, to increase their chances of securing and protecting their own interests, each aristocrat had ensured that their soldiers' armor was so distinctive that anyone could immediately identify the wearer's origin and

master.

“Man, why do we have to venture so deep into these damn mountains?” a soldier grumbled to the man next to him.

“C’mon, this isn’t so bad. We’re getting a hefty reward this time. That *does* mean it’ll be dangerous, but there’s a lot of career soldiers here, and they won’t just up and abandon us. They’re decked out with the newest magical weapons too.”

“Well, that’s reassuring.”

Both of these men were mercenaries employed by the same greedy aristocrat. They usually made their living as bandits, so some of the real soldiers in the host had no problems expressing their blatant disgust for mercenaries like them, but that didn’t matter in the end. This line of work required physical strength above all else, and the hired guns had plenty of that.

“Not to mention that it sounds like some demi-human or demon or something abducted the demi-human girls in the town and took them back to his mountain lair. If all goes well and we kill him, we might even get to *enjoy* some of the *spoils* left behind.”

“Heh heh, those demi-human *spoils* sure are made nice, huh? Definitely gonna have to try extra hard in that case.”

“Easy there. You get it up now and you’ll be useless later, ya hear?”

“Bullshit. My ‘staff’ ain’t that weak.”

The men forged ahead as they bantered, still blissfully unaware of the hell that awaited them.



Nighttime. Iluna was fast asleep, the maids had called it a night and headed to their room, and I was playing a board game with Lefi because we had time to kill. Then, out of absolutely nowhere, my map opened on its own via the interface.

“Huh...?”

“Hm? What is it, Yuki?”

“Invaders.”

I scanned the map while answering Lefi’s question. The map displayed itself automatically in two kinds of situations: when an enemy got too close to the dungeon’s core, which is the heart of the dungeon, and when an enemy that could bring in DP above a certain amount entered the dungeon’s territory. Since a monster’s worth was based on its strength, knowing how much DP it would net you was a good way to gauge how strong it was. The second situation wasn’t limited to a single specimen either. A group of monsters that would earn you a bunch of DP would also trigger the map’s auto-open feature, and it looked like that was exactly what had happened.

I’d recently added a feature that allowed me to view an enemy’s details at the top of the map, so I used that to check what exactly was headed our way. Humans. Around four or five hundred of them. Based on their equipment, they looked like military forces from...well, I didn’t even have to think about where they were from. There was at least a ninety percent chance that these “guests” were coming to return the favor for our unannounced “visit” to their town a while back.

“In short, they did not learn their lesson from the mayhem?”

“That about sums it up, yeah.”

A savage grin spread across Lefi’s face. In her eyes, them invading the Demonic Forest meant they were underestimating the existence of the Supreme Dragon. There was no chance whatsoever that she’d overlook something like that.

“...Shall I crush them?”

“No,” I replied, shaking my head. “I might ask you to help out if I end up in a bind, but I think we’ll be fine. I’ve got something I wanna try out.”

“Oh?”

To be honest, I’d actually expected something like this to happen. Even though I’d warned the town’s lord not to mess with us ever again, from the country’s perspective, all they saw was an unprovoked raid on their land. Any nation would be concerned about its reputation after something like that, just

like a time back on Earth when one of Japan's territories had been attacked and temporarily occupied by another country. Whether it was in this world or on Earth, once things escalated to that point, retaliation was no doubt on the table. So, thanks to political pressure from higher-ups, any agreement I had with that town's lord wouldn't make a difference no matter how hard the lord himself tried to prohibit entry into the Demonic Forest.

Lefi may have been the ancient Supreme Dragon, but the more time passed, the more the threat of her existence would be forgotten, and humans would inevitably do the same goddamn thing. Human history back on Earth had followed the same endless cycle over and over and over again, so it was something I knew about. And because it was something I knew about, this exact scenario was easy to predict. In other words, I was already prepared.

Since I'd gone on one expansion mission after another, almost the entirety of the surrounding forest was now part of my dungeon's territory. So the current situation made it the perfect opportunity to use a few of the dungeon's features I normally never used like traps and terrain modification. Because I'd expected this, I'd taken the liberty of setting some useful traps in advance and let me tell you, I was very much looking forward to testing said traps on the incoming guinea pigs.

With the wheels spinning in my head, I glanced at Lefi, who was right across from me, then to the sleeping Iluna.

After waking up in this world, I'd pretty much been living life as I damn well pleased. Frankly, I was having a hell of a time. I legit just screwed around every day, slacking off and having fun. I'd never once thought about going back to my old life. And real talk, I'd never thought about going back to human society or even back to being human either. Well, okay, if I'd never met Lefi and Iluna, there might have been *some* chance I would've had those thoughts, but I had met them, so it's moot. Anyway, that was why I'd show no mercy to anyone who threatened my new life. If they wanted a fight so badly, they'd get one. I'd destroy them all, no doubt in my mind.

"But I guess *one* warning wouldn't hurt." A friendly warning from a former human. If they went back to where they came from after I warned them, I'd leave them alone. But if they didn't... "Lefi, I'll be right back."

I stood up and brought out my wings.

“Very well. I shall await the return of your usual self. You had best make it quick, as your turn is next. If you do not, I may move your piece myself.”

She acted like nothing in particular was happening, just stayed calm and cool as a cucumber. *Damn, what an amazing woman.*

“Well, shoot, I wouldn’t want that. Guess I’ll have to take the super express back.”

I gave her a bitter grin while thanking her wholeheartedly on the inside. Then, I left the throne room.



Silence. Darkness.

Every now and then, I’d catch a glimpse of the night sentry yawning on his patrol and groups of soldiers huddled around campfires, alert and on standby. I found it strange that the monsters that usually attacked on sight weren’t anywhere nearby despite these humans making for easy prey. When I checked the map, sure enough, the monsters surrounding the area were keeping their distance. My bet was on them having installed a magical tool in their encampment—something like what had been used against Rir—that was stopping the monsters from getting close even if they wanted to.

I myself strode boldly through the throng of quiet tents. The soldiers who passed in front of me had no idea I was there and kept walking as if I didn’t exist. You guessed it—I was currently making great use of my Stealth ability. It was less effective the closer the enemy’s power was to mine, but the fact that I hadn’t been caught meant that all of the soldiers here were small fry. Probably just rank-and-file troops instead of trained career soldiers.

I headed right into the heart of the campsite without anyone noticing and finally arrived at a particular tent. It was bigger than all the other tents and looked a whole lot nicer to boot.

This is it, huh? After that single glance at it, I slipped inside without hesitation.

“Who’s there?” someone asked in a low, cautious tone the second I entered.

“Okay, so *you* can sense me.”

Like I thought, he’s strong.

What I saw inside the tent was a lone man who was clearly alert to something because he was sitting up in a bed and had his hand on the hilt of the sword by his pillow. This man had the highest level of anyone in the campsite. Based on the monster categories Lew had mentioned the other day, he was strong enough to defeat a War-level monster without breaking too much of a sweat. That was no small feat. Not for a human, anyway.

I’d taken a look at his stats beforehand. He had a lot of abilities related to troop management like Tactics and Military Command, so I was almost positive he had to be this army’s commander. I activated my power and gradually dispelled Stealth to make myself visible again. It didn’t take him long to figure out who was standing in front of him. With my excellent demon lord’s night vision, I clearly saw his eyes widen and his body stiffen.

“You’re—”

“Shout and I’ll kill you.”

I jacked up my power for a second—just long enough to intimidate him with my bloodthirsty aura. I’d learned how to use my magic like that after the incident in that town. If I focused on my intent to kill and mixed it in with my power, I could release that sensation into the air around me. The strength of my murderous impulse differed based on the strength of the individuals who picked up on it too. Basically every creature in this world possessed whatever it was that let them sense magic, which was why I could even use the aura of my power as a weapon itself, according to Lefi.

It was an *extremely* effective weapon, no joke. Not against those stronger than me, of course, but definitely against monsters at or below my level. By slamming them with the power of my bloodlust, I could make them flinch long enough to stop them from attacking. The super-weak ones would straight-up pass out without making any kind of move.

Looked like the effect was pretty strong against this guy too. He hadn’t fainted, but I could see a cold sweat dripping down his face. He was also smart enough to know to keep his mouth shut.

"You're the commander, right?" I asked in as arrogant a voice as I could manage.

"N-No, I'm not."

Excuse me, what the fuck?

"...Are you serious?"

"I am."

What? No way. Wait just a goddamn minute. Despite him being more suspicious of me than ever, I didn't think he was lying. *Oh no... He's telling the truth. Shit. Now what do I do?!*

Aw hell. How humiliating. I'd been so freaking confident asking if he was the commander and I turned out to be completely off the mark. Ugh, and now that I thought about it, it kinda made sense. The strongest person wouldn't necessarily be the top brass. Son of a bitch, that's so embarrassing. I would very much like to crawl into a hole now, thanks. In fact, I think I'll dig one myself.

No. Hold on. Calm down. Think carefully. There was no doubt in my mind that he was the strongest person in the camp, which meant there was a good chance he had at least a little bit of influence. He was even in a way fancier tent than everyone else, for pete's sake. If he wasn't officially the commander, sure as sugar he was on equal footing with one. *Okay, then I don't think I'm completely off the mark.*

"Hmm, is that right? I assumed you were because you're the strongest here, but I guess I was wrong."

"The title of commander belongs to someone else," he said with a sour expression. Seemed like he was bitter about it.

Ah ha, so there's beef there. They were still just an abstract concept to me, but I just remembered that aristocrats existed in this world. Some noble with a higher social rank than this old guy probably stole the position and the power that came with it from him. But whatever. It wasn't like I actually cared about any of that. All that mattered was that he seemed important enough to help me out.

“Then I’ll have you be my messenger. I want you to deliver a message to your superiors. And make sure you do it word for word.”

“...Understood.”

Though he seemed kinda reluctant, the man agreed without a fight. It didn’t look like he could use Analysis, but he didn’t need it to know how much stronger than him I was. The fact that he recognized this instinctively made his strength stand out even more compared to all the other grunts. And on top of that, I could tell he was an excellent soldier by the way he was closely monitoring the situation, trying to find a way out even while he listened to me speak.

“All right, listen up. I don’t know jack about you scumbags—not why you came here or what your goal is—but I’m warning you not to proceed any further. All of this is my territory, and if you go any farther into it, I’ll kill you. Every single one of you. If you don’t want to die, I suggest you turn around right the fuck now.”

The man swallowed uncomfortably when he heard my threat, but he still worked up the courage to voice his thoughts.

“...I-I have one question.”

“What?”

“Wh-Why are you warning us even though you’re so powerful?”

“Because it’s a pain in the ass,” I replied with a smirk any villain would rate a perfect ten.

“A...pain...?”

“It’s not like I have anything against you all, I just don’t have the slightest bit of interest in your existence. If you don’t fight me then I won’t fight you either, but if you plan on starting shit, I’ll destroy you. That’s how little you all mean to me. That said, it’d be a pain in the ass to stomp out every single ant that comes after me, right?”

“S-So we’re nothing more than insects to you?!”

“Pretty much, yeah.”

Though we all know the ants in this forest are brutally strong. I mean, I've never been more afraid than I was that time I fought them. As you could clearly tell, I was seriously traumatized by those massive, chittering motherfuckers swarming me that day, so in that particular sense, I'd say that bugs were an infinitely bigger threat to me than anything else. Half-kidding, half-serious.

"Anyway, there's my message. I'll give you a small grace period, so I suggest you make the smart choice if you don't want to die."

I activated Stealth once again and melted into the darkness, leaving that place the same way I'd arrived—invisibly.



"Of course it wouldn't be that easy."

I laughed sarcastically after checking my map. The man I'd come into contact with had taken my threat seriously and rushed out of the tent as soon as I'd disappeared. He woke up his subordinates, and they all raced to the tent where the actual commander was sleeping. But because none of them knew that the man had met with me, they thought he'd lost his mind, so they ignored his message and booted him out of the tent.

Outside, the man shook off the men restraining him, then taking only the troops he himself commanded, withdrew from the forest. A wise decision given that it didn't matter what others thought. He who lived, won.

"Yuki? Why have you returned with nary a scratch? It is as if nothing of note occurred."

"Nothing of note *did* occur. I only went there to warn them."

"Then you should have said so before you left! I will have you know that not only did I send you off with quite a fuss, I even stayed awake waiting for you to return. Now I seem like an utter fool for behaving so considerately."

Lefi was so miffed that her cheeks were red. She was kinda cute like that.

"Aw, come on, don't pout. I'm sorry, okay? I'll show you something interesting to make up for it."

With that, I made the map visible to Lefi. Though I didn't know the exact

criteria that made the interface visible to anyone not in the dungeon's inner circle, I had figured out a basic standard: if the degree of trust with the "outsider" was above a certain level, they could have limited access to the interface. The dungeon still considered Lefi an intruder, but I'd been able to give her permission to view my display for a while now. And right now, I was giving her a look at the dungeon via a special feature of the map.

"These are...the enemies heading this way?"

"Yeah, the morons who think they can attack us and win."

On the screen was the campsite I'd visited earlier. It was so clear that we could see the dumb expression on the night watch's face as he tried not to fall asleep standing. The view was being sent to us courtesy of a dungeon monster called an "Evil Eye." An Evil Eye was the size of a baseball, with one huge eye and wings on its round body. It had the ability to transmit what it was seeing to me via the interface. Basically, it was a remote camera. I'd left a bunch of the little guys behind in that area before I came back to the dungeon. They were how I'd been able to watch the man run to the commander's tent.

Evil Eyes were extremely useful, but it turned out that they were technically nonliving creatures—so-called golems. Their power source was the dungeon's energy, meaning they couldn't be operated outside the dungeon's territory. It was their one weakness; I still found them extremely helpful. Just another way that my dungeon's security measures were improving by the day.

Okay, back to the matter at hand. Since these clowns had chosen to ignore my warning, that meant they planned on continuing to march our way. It was possible that they had another goal in coming here, but it didn't matter because they had still entered my territory unauthorized. I'd been nice enough to tell them that this was my property, yet they'd insisted on trespassing. They were now officially intruders, and armed ones at that.

Oh well. If they wanted a fight then that's what they'd get. I had to protect myself and everyone in my dungeon, after all. I'd use these miserable excuses for human beings as lab rats for my traps— Ahem. What I meant was that I'd do whatever was necessary as legitimate self-defense. *That's my story and I'm sticking to it.*



“Hey, what’s going on?” one of the sentries asked in suspicion. “When did it become morning?”

“Ha ha, what the hell are you talking about?” the soldier next to him responded. “You talking in your sleep? It’s still...night...”

He couldn’t finish his sentence. The soldier behind him had stabbed him right through the heart.

“I-It’s the enemy! We’re surrounded!” the man who’d just killed his comrade screamed while swinging his blade erratically in the empty space around him. He moved like he thought someone was actually there.

Nobody in the camp realized what was going on. They had no idea that the person standing next to them saw something totally different than what they did, that whatever their neighbor talked about was completely unrelated to their own experience. It plunged the campsite into turmoil. Soldiers began to wake up, noticing that something strange was occurring. Torches started flaring one after another, and soon, the whole area was lit up.

“What’s happening?!” cried the current commander of the brigade. An overweight man, he looked like the type who had gained his position through political influence rather than any sort of personal merit.

“W-We don’t know! Each of the men is talking about something different from the others!”

The subordinate who’d replied then abruptly keeled over. As he did, his head slipped off his neck and rolled a few times, stopping at the commander’s feet.

“Wh-What in God’s name?!”

“Gaaaaahhhh!!! Theeeee eeeeeeeeeemyyyy!!!”

That scream came from the soldier who had just separated his comrade’s head from his body. He was completely deranged, his mouth half-open and his sword covered in blood splatters.

“H-Hey, stop! S-Somebody stop this man!”

Acting on the commander’s order, other soldiers rushed to restrain their

crazed ally.

“What is going on here?!”

The campsite was deep in the throes of chaos.

“Interesting...” Lefi muttered as we watched our friendly neighborhood intruders. “A Bewitching Tree.”

“Oh, you figured it out?”

What I’d used against those soldiers was a Rauschgift poplar, a tree also known as a Bewitching Tree. By emitting its magic into the air, it could make any nearby creatures hallucinate. The effects weren’t immediate, so if the enemy was a monster, it would immediately recognize the hallucinogen and escape. Humans, however, weren’t particularly sensitive to magic, which made it easy for the tree’s magic to build up in their bodies. It didn’t affect everyone in the exact same way, but if someone absorbed enough of it, they would literally go insane.

That sort of tree didn’t grow in the wild, of course. No, it was a product of the dungeon that I’d planted myself. It made for the perfect trap.

Traps created by the dungeon could be used freely anywhere within the dungeon’s territory. Plus, I could operate them remotely from the throne room—like I was doing now—which meant I could time the release of each tree’s magic. The minute I realized these stupid assholes hadn’t listened to my warning was the minute I’d started activating the tree trap.

Oh, as a side note, this kind of magic-based attack had no effect on me or Lefi because of our insanely high magic reserves. We had so much magical energy swirling around inside our bodies that external magic couldn’t find any openings to get in and affect us. Or so the theory went.

My situation was a little different than Lefi’s since my body was made of mana itself, which was the source of magic. You’d think that a magic attack would do a lot of damage to my body because of that, but you’d be wrong. Apparently, as long as the magic inside me was dense enough, it could easily repel any excess energy directed at me from the outside.

You wanna know how I know that? Because I'd tested it on myself. I'd kept a Super Potion on standby just in case since I'd been scared brainless during the experiment, but literally nothing had happened to me. That said, if *Lefi* had used her magical poison attack on me it'd be a totally different story. Pretty sure that'd be super effective.

"But will this be enough to annihilate their entire force?"

"Don't worry, the show's just getting started. You know a genius like me wouldn't let the fun end so quickly."

"Yuki, you are aware that those who call themselves geniuses are in fact nothing of the sort, correct? That is common knowledge."

"Then how about this? A genius like me who's just genius enough to never lose any board game to the Supreme Dragon, Lefi."

"O-Our battles are far from over! You win only because you are slightly more knowledgeable than me. Besides, our earlier match has yet to be decided! If you insist on challenging me, then let us settle the matter right here and now!"

"Yeah, yeah. We'll do it later, okay?"

I laughed at Lefi's gloomy expression and lightly patted her on the head. Then, I activated my next trap.

"Over here! The magic isn't as strong in this area!"

Seemed the enemy had finally noticed how far the hallucinogenic magic had spread.

The man who'd yelled about a safe zone was most likely a conjurer based on his conspicuously high magic stat. He surveyed the region while leading the rest of the soldiers to a place where the hallucinogenic energy wasn't as thick. The man's instructions brought a little bit of order to the mayhem in the campsite, but just then, they all heard a whistling sound. The troops following the conjurer noticed the weird change in the atmosphere before the conjurer himself did.

"Y-You! Th-That...!"

“What...?”

Hearing the tremble in his comrade’s voice, the conjurer turned toward him and saw the soldier pointing at him. He looked down at what was being pointed at and saw...nothing. Absolutely nothing. What he saw—or rather, what he *didn’t* see—was the majority of his torso. Instead, there was a massive hole between his breastbone and just below where his belly button used to be. Everything in between, from his skin and bones to his muscles and organs, was gone. The moment he became aware of that was the moment he died; he never even felt any pain. As he fell to the ground, the thing that took his life appeared almost casually from behind him.

“Ivy...?”

Yup, ivy. Its sharply pointed end was stained red and had the conjurer’s guts dangling from it. It snaked and coiled like it was alive, slithering around until it confirmed its next target. In a flash, it pierced a dumbfounded soldier’s skull through his helm. Blood gushed from it like a fountain.

“W-We can’t go this way! There’s a monster here!”

Panicked, the soldiers turned to head back to their campsite.

“Why aren’t the magical machines working?! I thought they were set up!”

“Hey, you over there! Get it together!”

“How do we get out of here?!”

Having lost what they’d thought would be their escape route, the soldiers devolved into a disordered mess. A few got together with their comrades to try to find a solution, while others shoved their allies out of the way so they could save themselves. Some went completely batshit crazy, screaming bloody murder and swinging their swords like lunatics at their own men.

But there was more to come.

“Wh-What is this?! A swamp?!”

His foot caught in the bottomless swamp that appeared out of nowhere, the man started sinking with thick, wet, gloppy sounds.

“Nooo! H-Help meee—”

A plant with a huge maw swallowed him whole, and he began to dissolve while still alive. A poisonous mist, harsher than the strongest acid, surrounded his whole body, melting his flesh.

“Gaaaaahhhh!!”

The military host’s numbers decreased one soldier at a time. There was no escape to be found no matter which direction they headed. Wherever they went, they would find a living hell.

“Shit! Shit, shit, shit! Get away from me!”

The commander, who should have been organizing and leading his men, had instead lost control of himself and descended into madness. He wouldn’t be giving orders anytime soon, that was for sure.

Despairing wails and death cries echoed deep throughout the forest before gradually subsiding until finally, silence settled upon the woods once again.

“Welp. That went a lot better than I expected.”

I could feel my face twitching slightly as I watched everything play out on the screen. All I’d had to do this time around was activate the traps I’d set whenever the enemies got close to them. What an easy job. It felt like I’d just played a tower defense game, albeit one where I had to manually make the towers attack.



The reason so many of the traps had been related to nature was because of the surrounding forest. With them blending in so perfectly, the enemy had no way of noticing anything out of the ordinary. If I'd installed typical game traps like bowguns or spikes, they would've stood out like a sore thumb. Those kinds fit way better in places like caves.

Speaking of caves, I had no plans to lay any traps in the one in front of the throne room. I didn't want them hurting Iluna or the maids on the off chance they malfunctioned.

Still, though, what we'd just witnessed was pretty damn gory. The entire thing was so grotesque that I wouldn't have been surprised if "Rated R" had flashed across the screen. It was a good thing Iluna hadn't woken up. There was no way I could have let her see any of that.

To be completely honest, I didn't have a high tolerance for gore. I'd done what I had to to test the utility of the traps, but moving forward, I wanted to avoid using them as much as possible.

"Hmm... I would say that was a resounding success, considering you decimated so many of them with traps alone," Lefi muttered, clearly impressed. She hadn't batted an eyelash the whole time we'd been watching the bloodbath. I guess stuff like that was par for the course as the Supreme Dragon?

Jeez, she's one tough cookie. Gotta respect it.

"Well, it was pretty easy considering that the guy in charge was dumber than a box of rocks. I noticed that they weren't all that coordinated either."

Analyzing the situation as it played out gave me the feeling that they were less of a proper army and more of a disorganized group of small militarized factions. Their gear didn't all match either, so they'd probably all come from different places.

For as complicated as their personnel setup was, my concept for the traps had been simple: confuse the ever-loving life out of the enemy, then crush them one by one. A fundamental strategy used since ancient times. Not gonna lie, I hadn't actually thought things would go as well as they did, but thanks to the

intruders' lack of coordination, the hallucinogen tactic I'd started with had been way more effective than I'd predicted. When it was all said and done, wiping them out had taken next to no effort.

After everything that went down, I still had one burning question. What was more frightening, the enemy's total lack of competence or the dungeon's hidden strength that, even without counting the man I'd warned who'd taken his unit and dipped, had easily destroyed more than four hundred soldiers?

In any case, it definitely wasn't a *bad* thing for the dungeon to be that powerful. I'd take it as a huge plus, actually. *I hope you'll have my back from here on out too, Mr. Dungeon.*

"Even so, the locations you chose for the traps were quite cleverly conceived."

"Well, I just figured that if humans were gonna invade, they'd be coming from the direction of the town. That's why I focused most of them in that direction. Although I *will* admit that I added a bunch more after I scouted them out."

"Your logic is certainly sound. Hm, yes... Perhaps I shall use the same strategy myself next. And now, Yuki, as you promised, it is time to continue our match."

I didn't know what that "yes" was supposed to mean, but it brightened her mood as she moved in front of the game board.

"Wait, you wanna play *now*?"

"Of course. The match must be settled quickly, else both sides are more likely to compromise and declare a draw. That would be unacceptable."

"So you say, but dawn's only a few hours from now. Won't that interfere with your beauty sleep, Your Majesty?"

"As I have been napping too often lately, I no longer feel the need to slumber at night."

This good-for-nothing Supreme Dragon...

You can bet your ass that I ended up kicking hers.

Side Story 2: Gamdia Lawston

Asleep in one of many pavilions erected on the campsite in the depths of the Demonic Forest, Gamdia Lawston woke up when a sense of tension prickled his skin.

He opened his eyes and sat up in his bed, aware that something wasn't right. His tent seemed to have been transported to another dimension entirely, submerged as it was in the miasma of wrongness. *Something...is here...?*

"Who's there?"

He asked that question with a hazy idea of wanting answers while unconsciously stretching his hand toward the sword near his pillow.

"Okay, so *you* can sense me."

A person suddenly appeared, their relaxed figure seemingly seeping out of the darkness. They were clearly male, with jet-black hair and one eye a scarlet color. From his back protruded dragon-like wings. He was most likely part of the demon species, and young as well. Based on all those characteristics and the information he'd received some time ago, Gamdia determined that this was the man who'd attacked Alfiro.

"You're—"

"Shout and I'll kill you."

The minute he spat those words out, the air itself suddenly became overwhelmingly heavy, pressing down on Gamdia's entire body. If he lost focus for even an instant, he felt like his consciousness would be stolen away. His mind was being torn at by the thick, dark energy emanating from the man's body. Drops of cold sweat rolled down his cheeks. Once his silence was assured, the man began his one-sided conversation.

Gamdia learned that the man had come only to relay a warning. Having said what he needed to, the man once again melted into the darkness, disappearing

from sight. The instant he could no longer feel the demon man's presence, Gamdia took a deep, shaky breath as if he'd forgotten how to breathe at all until then.

Terrifying.

He was absolutely certain that the man was not an enemy they could win against. Even if they attacked him with the full might of the battalion currently stationed in the Forest, he knew it would only end in them being massacred. He ruminated in silence.

The official reason given for this military expedition was the subjugation of the monsters that had conducted an assault against Alfiro and the demon that had commanded them. Its *true* objective, however, was to ascertain just what natural resources were located in the Demonic Forest. In short, they were to conduct a preliminary investigation in preparation for acquiring new land. "Revenge for the sake of our citizens" sounded much more acceptable than "muster the troops for money," which was why the official pretext existed in the first place. After all, a just cause was necessary to mobilize the military forces.

When Gamdia had first received the marching orders and learned the real reason behind them, he'd thought, *This must be a joke*. He couldn't believe that he and his men were being forced to go to war for such a goal. The Demonic Forest was well-known for the powerful creatures that inhabited it; no matter how high the quality of their magical equipment was, he knew that the instant something went wrong, the damage would be devastating for the army. That outcome was as clear as day.

Moreover, a creature so infamous that nothing more needed to be said about it dwelled within the Forest, dominating that ecosystem's hierarchy—the Supreme Dragon. If they antagonized the beast, the army would be the least of their concerns because the country itself would be wiped clean off the map. Despite all this, his superiors forced the military advance through, which meant that Gamdia and the troops he commanded had to participate in a war not of their choosing.

Stuck between a rock and hard place, Gamdia had appealed for direct

command of the expedition in hopes that he could help minimize unnecessary casualties. Unfortunately, though, the person appointed to the commander's post was some godforsaken cretin of a noble who'd come all the way to the front lines solely out of lust for untold riches.

"Absurd" was the only way he could describe the situation at hand. Gamdia now fully understood why the lord of Alfiro himself had not only vehemently opposed the expedition but also refused to provide any sort of assistance. Lord Rulouvia had firmly declared that he wouldn't involve himself or his men in the endeavor in any way whatsoever.

I have to appeal to that idiot commander for immediate withdrawal of our forces. He had to try. He didn't care even if the top brass removed him from the military register for proposing retreat, he had to at least make the attempt. He'd been opposed to this expedition from the beginning. He found it appalling that soldiers would be sent to die needlessly for such an unjust war.

As long as money was tangled up in this business, it was extremely unlikely that his proposal for withdrawal would be accepted. But he still had to try, even if his men were the only ones that survived. With that do-or-die determination, Gamdia quickly got dressed and raced out of his tent.



Several days later, in the frontier town of Alfiro, two men stood facing each other in the garrison office.

"Wh-What is the meaning of this?!"

"It's just as I said. Knight Commander Gamdia Lawston, you are dismissed. There is no longer any need for you to return to the royal capital."

"I would accept my dismissal if it were the result of a court-martial, but to be removed from my post so easily, and in a place like this... You shouldn't have the authority to do that!"

"I'm not the one who orchestrated your dismissal. His Highness, the leader of this operation, is the one who ordered your removal."

"His Highness did...?"

Dumbfounded, Gamdia had only that response.

“Correct. Even if the directive didn’t come from His Highness, our country’s military doesn’t need a coward like you who’d so shamelessly retreat from the battlefield. Had he not ordered your dismissal, I would have found another way to have you stripped of your position,” the other man informed him with a cold stare and indifferent tone.

Gamdia had somehow managed to escape the Demonic Forest, but what had ultimately awaited him was his dismissal as knight commander. After his flight from the Forest, his initial plan had been to make his way to the royal capital as soon as possible to inform his superiors, who’d been optimistic about the operation, about the dangers of the Forest. He knew that the greedy nobles wouldn’t listen to anything he had to report, but he’d wanted to convey his message to those above him. The king was the sort of man who listened to his subordinates and his citizens, so Gamdia hoped that his warning would reach the king’s ears through his higher-ups. Once the king knew, he would have likely conducted a thorough investigation to put a stop to the aggression. But his plan had failed from the outset.

To start, it had taken him half a day to reach Alfiro from the Demonic Forest. Then, when he’d finally arrived, he was confined here against his will. Before he could even think about putting his plan into action, an officer he didn’t recognize had arrived and ordered him to stay in Alfiro. They had stated that he and his men would ride on their fastest horses to the capital to make the report.

Although Gamdia had held some reservations about that roundabout suggestion, he’d held his emotions in check and decided to wait patiently for a response. However, several days had passed since his return to Alfiro. Just when his frustration had peaked, he’d finally received his answer...and this was it.

Gamdia had no idea that the expedition had been unilaterally ordered by the crown prince and not the king. He was also unaware that if the king found out and started making inquiries, the conspirators would face punishment. All Gamdia knew at present was what he’d been told, and none of it made any sense to him.

“Ah, and you needn’t worry about the unit you brought back with you. A brave knight commander worthy of this nation—one very unlike you—has been appointed to your post. Any other remaining duties you had will also be transferred to him. I believe that is all, so I’ll be taking my leave. Here’s to your excellent health, Sir *Former* Knight Commander.”

With that snide, insincere parting comment, Gamdia’s stranger of a superior left the room.

“Argh!” Gamdia slammed his glass violently against the table after gulping down its contents. “This will only add to the needless sacrifices! What in damnation is the brass thinking?!”

Based on everything his nasty former superior had told him, Gamdia inferred that the executive commanders had no intention of halting their assault on the Demonic Forest. It clearly didn’t matter to them that the situation was getting out of control since they’d apparently even abandoned the “official” reason for the mission. Aside from Gamdia and the men he’d led on his withdrawal, not a single soldier from the expedition had returned alive. He didn’t want to think of the operation as a complete loss, but even if it wasn’t, it would be common sense to abort the mission in the face of such unexpectedly heavy losses.

There’s something strange about this situation. He had a feeling something wicked was occurring without his knowledge. He knew he had to take action, but with his connections to the country having been so unceremoniously severed, there was little he *could* do.

“Rough seas, Sir Lawston?”

Gamdia turned toward the source of those words. There, he saw a middle-aged man who wore austere but high-quality clothing.

“Lord Rulouvia!”

Before him stood the lord of Alfiro himself. Because he was drunk, Gamdia staggered slightly in his rush to stand up and greet the lord. At his movement, everyone’s gazes turned to him for an instant, but they soon lost interest and returned to their own conversations.

“Be at ease. I’m currently in disguise, so no need to make a fuss. But... Judging from your condition, I’d wager you received less-than-welcome news?”

“Yes, you’d be correct. Apparently, the nation doesn’t need cowards, so I’ve been stripped of my post as knight commander. I was fully aware that what I did could be deemed desertion under enemy fire and had been more than prepared for a harsh punishment, but even I didn’t expect dismissal without a fair trial.”

“I see... So they’ve gone that far with their foolish plan...”

The lord’s behavior clearly indicated he was deep in thought. The grim look on his face combined with the intensity of his gaze further underscored his fierce inner turmoil.

“Lord Rulouvia...?”

“Hm? Ah, apologies, it’s nothing. More to the point, Sir Lawston, this means that you’re no longer employed as of today, yes?”

“Huh? Oh, yes, I suppose...”

“Bah ha. I know it’s rude to you, but I really must thank your incompetent superiors for dismissing you. What would you say to working with me?”

“Do you mean here in Alfiro?”

“Indeed. It would be the height of folly if I didn’t at least try to persuade an excellent soldier like yourself to come under my employ. Well, I’m sure you have a lot to mull over, so for now, why don’t we share a few drinks?”

“I understand. If that’s what you want, then I’d be glad to join you.”

The lord’s face underwent a transformation, changing from stern to smiling in an instant. Gamdia let out a wry chuckle, then pulled out the chair next to his own for Lord Rulouvia.

Epilogue: The Start of Each Day

“D-Damn you, Lefi! The hell is wrong with you, making me play this game with you until morning?! Ever hear of self-control?! You knew I was tired from staying up late working yesterday, but you still refused to let the match end, and now it’s the freaking morning!”

“H-How dare you?! I will have you know that I stayed up late solely to wait for you! That warrants that you spend at least some of your time being my opponent! Besides, *you* were the one who said you’d play with me when you came back!”

“This clearly isn’t *some* of my time though, is it?! It’s *morning*! *That’s* why I’m pissed!”

When Iluna opened her eyes, she heard the young man and girl arguing in whispers.

“Ngh...”

She dragged herself up as she rubbed her eyes sleepily. Once she finally opened them properly, she saw the two people she loved most in the world glaring at each other. They looked a little tired to her.

“Now look what you’ve done! Your screeching woke Iluna up!”

“I-I would say the same of you!”

Iluna yawned and stretched her little arms, then spoke to the two as they continued arguing.

“Good morning, Yukiki, Lady Lefifi. What’s wrong? You both have so much energy so early!”

“Morning, Iluna. Nothing’s wrong so much as this idiot doesn’t know what ‘limit’ means.”

“Morning. But do not listen to him, Iluna. He merely has a horribly short temper.”

“Hmm? Oh well, it doesn’t matter.”

The two kept silent, as the innocent Iluna had handed down her final judgment with those words.

“Oh, is everyone awake already? Top of the morning to all three of you. Iluna aside, you two are up super early, huh?”

Her face peeking out from the room next door, the dog-eared Lew, one of the dungeon’s two newest residents, spoke.

“Morning, Lew. Where’s Leila?”

“She just woke up; she’s changing into her uniform right now. I’m pretty sure she’ll be ready soon?”

“Right. I forgot that she’s not much of a morning person. Roger that. Whaddya say I get breakfast going, then? Oop, what do we have here?” As Yuki stood up, stretching and yawning, a blue lump flew into his arms. “Oh, hey, Shii. Morning. I’m about to make breakfast, so I’ll play with you a little later, okay? Why don’t you hang out with Iluna till then?”

It was the dungeon’s pet, Shii the slime. It jumped from Yuki’s chest to the floor and wiggled as if saying, “Okey dokey!” Then, following Yuki’s suggestion, it leaped toward Iluna and landed in her arms.

“Good morning, Shii!”

Shii jiggled happily in response to both Iluna’s smile and her words.

“All right, Lew, I want you to help me make breakfast. Lefi, you need to help out sometimes too. I spent all night wiping the floor with you at that game, so I better not hear you say no.”

“You got it, my lord!”

“Grr... The privilege of the victor. I have no choice, then. But beware that I am utterly useless when it comes to housework.”

“Show a *little* shame when you say that. Goddamn, woman.”

While Yuki stared at Lefi in exasperation, Leila, the sheep-horned girl, came out of the same room Lew had just left. Judging by her face, she was still sleepy.

“I’m so sorry for my lateness. I’ll set to work right away, sir.”

“Don’t worry about it. You’re right on time, actually, since I was just about to get started on breakfast.”

As everyone went about their duties, the inside of the dungeon came alive with the sounds of activity. Iluna giggled quietly while watching it all.

“What’s up, Iluna? Something got you in a good mood today?”

“Nope, it’s nothing. I’ll help you too, Yukiki! Shii said it wants to help too!”

“Oh yeah? Thanks. You’re both great kids. Here, follow me.”

And thus, the day began.



Iluna’s family was dead. Humans came to attack their village, so her parents took up arms and fought to protect her. They fought so many humans right up until they took their last breaths. The last thing they told her was, “Live.”

The clever little girl understood that her parents had died protecting her. That was exactly why she pushed her body as hard as she could and moved her legs forward as far as they could carry her. She didn’t want to trample on the wish her parents had left behind despite the lack of hope in the depths of her despair.

And then, the wish her parents had staked their lives on came true. Surrounding her now were people she could call family.

First, there was Yukiki, Iluna’s big brother. He was kind, funny, and gave her the blood she needed as a vampire. He was her favorite person in the world. He took care of her every day, so she was always grateful to him from the bottom of her heart. For vampires, blood was life. It was so integral to their existence that they essentially considered it sacred.

If a person willingly gave a vampire something so precious, she’d been taught by her mother that that person should be to her what her father was to her mother. Iluna understood how important that lesson truly was, which was why she became so attached to Yuki; it had made her very happy to have the person who’d saved her share his blood with her. Because of her bond with him, she

felt warm and safe whenever she was with him.

Next was Lady Lefifi, Iluna's big sister. Her way of speaking was a bit odd, and though she was supposed to be the big sister, she was quite immature in a lot of ways. Iluna could always rely on her whenever she was in trouble, though.

Lefi looked like she had so much fun being with her beloved Yuki that it made Iluna smile just watching them. She knew so much about so many things, and sometimes, she'd even talk about her past, so Iluna always liked listening to her talk. Iluna loved her a lot too.

Then there were her two newest big sisters, Leila and Lew, who'd started living with them a little while ago. When Leila had first arrived, Iluna had heard the word "mistress" in relation to her. After finding out what it meant, Iluna had gotten somewhat angry because she'd misunderstood Leila's role, but now, she got along really well with her and Lew both. She thought they were wonderful people.

Whenever Lew made a mistake, Leila would scold her, and Yuki would laugh as he watched the two of them. Iluna enjoyed seeing them like that, but what she loved more was seeing everyone be friends. She would always smile subconsciously at their antics as she secretly observed them.

Finally, there were the pets, Rir and Shii. Those two always played with her, and even helped her have fun whenever she started feeling bored.

Surrounded by all these wonderful people, Iluna eventually transformed into someone who smiled every day.

Today was another fun day. Being here helps heal the sadness of losing you, Papa, Mama. So I don't want you to worry about me. Because of you, I'm sooo happy now! Thank you, Papa, Mama...



Special Story: Stroll

The sun was bright and warm. A refreshing breeze gently stroked my cheek before blowing all across the vast swath of nature.

“Mmm, the weather today is perfect for a walk! Let’s head out, Iluna.”

“Let’s gooo!”

“Grr...”

Iluna and I cried out excitedly while Rir let out a strained grumble. A leash hung from his neck. I’d bought something called a “flexible collar” from the DP Catalog and put it on him, then attached a leash to it. Iluna held that leash with one tiny hand and my hand with the other.

“I understand your suffering. Because of that eccentric master of yours, I, too, am subject to being treated as a pet in spite of my being known as a legendary dragon.”

Watching us with slightly annoyed eyes was the silver-haired dragon girl, Lefi.

“What is it, Lefi? You wanna take Rir for a walk too? Sorry, but you’ll have to wait your turn.”

“Hmph. I do not recall making such a request, thank you very much.”

Oh yeah?

There was a simple explanation for why we were outside like this. I’d told Iluna that famous story about the group of 101 black-spotted dogs as a bedtime story, and that led to her developing an interest in the creatures known as “dogs.” She’d asked me a ton of questions, and after a whole lot of discussion, she’d said, “I wanna go on a walk too!”

Apparently, dogs existed in this world too, but they weren’t something normal people could catch a glimpse of since strays were generally used as military or hunting dogs. Few if any found homes anywhere else, so they were seen as ferocious creatures rather than pets. It was a total waste. I couldn’t

think of any other animal that was as good a snuggler as a dog.

Setting aside this world's pet situation, I damn well couldn't turn down our adorable princess's request. Our family obviously didn't have a dog, but we did have a watchdog of sorts in the form of Fluffrir, our fenrir buddy. He was basically a dog, so I asked him if he'd be cool with helping me fulfill Iluna's wish. That was how we ended up leaving the cave to take a stroll outside.

The meadow level I'd added a little while ago wouldn't cut it because despite my occasional changes and additions to the area, the majority of it was still kinda bleak and monotonous. Outside had its dangers, but Iluna had me, Rir, *and* Lefi right now, so—well, all we really needed was Lefi. With her around, our safety was guaranteed no matter what attacked. I'd bet if a crazy strong monster suddenly showed up looking like it wanted to snack on us, it would end up joining us on the walk at the Supreme Dragon's behest. Psych! Nah, I was pretty sure monsters would sense the massive power difference between them and her and just straight-up avoid us.

"Yukiki, it's okay to let a pet do whatever they want on a walk, right?"

Iluna gazed up at me from under the straw hat she was wearing.

"Sure is. People usually take their pets on walks for exercise since they spend so much time cooped up in a house."

I let Rir run free within the dungeon's territory anyway, though, so we didn't have to worry about him needing exercise.

"Okay! Rir! We can go wherever you want, Rir!"

Iluna patted him gently while talking to him. Unsure of what to do, Rir looked at me for guidance.

"Do it," I whispered with a smile.

"Grr..."

Rir admitted defeat when he realized that I was totally and completely on Iluna's side and not his. With a reluctant whine, he gave in to the command.

Sorry, Rir, old buddy, old pal. As far as our dungeon's dynamics went, I couldn't defy Iluna, and he couldn't defy me.

“Yuki, do not come crying to me if you someday meet your end between his jaws.”

“If he bites me to death, the dungeon goes with me, so our very smart Rir wouldn’t do that, would he?”

By the way, Lefi was wearing a straw hat that matched Iluna’s, except that hers had holes for her horns. I’d made Iluna wear the hat to avoid heatstroke, but Lefi was a different story. She complained about the sunlight being aggravating or whatever, so I’d just bought one for her to shut her up. Lately, this slacker of a Supreme Dragon had been holing herself up almost exclusively inside the dungeon, which was why she’d started hating the sunlight. I had to force her out like this every so often or she’d never leave the throne room. Honestly, with each passing day, her original majesty gradually disappeared. Actually, come to think of it, it was probably all gone by now.

What kinda annoyed me was how unexpectedly good the hat looked on her. She was wearing her usual dress because she found it easy to put on and take off, and that combined with the straw hat made her a vision. But it was only her appearance, okay? Just on the outside because I knew what she was like on the inside. Still, the sight of her both roused and soothed the senses. She was quite the head-turner in that outfit. And since Iluna had a pretty face too, that plus their matching outfits would make you swear they were sisters.

“Why are you scrutinizing me like that, Yuki? Have you been unwittingly charmed by me?”

“Nah, I was just thinking it’s too bad the only good thing about you is the way you look.”

“Oh? Do I sense a hidden meaning in your words?”

While walking and talking, we arrived at the forest not far from our cave. Aside from the steep cliff on the other side of the cave’s entrance, the area around it was fairly open with great views, but the forest itself was just a few minutes’ walk down the path leading up to it. Technically, there was a forest above the cliff too, but it got rockier the higher you climbed until it was nothing but bare rock. I’d verified that after I learned how to fly.

“Hey, Rir, where are we going?”

“Grrrr!”

Up until now, Rir had been casually treading along the path, but Iluna’s question put a troubled look on his face. A few seconds later, though, he seemed to have decided where he wanted to go. Now a lot surer of his destination, he shook his head and pointed it where he was headed.

“Okey dokey! This way, you two!”

“Roger, Wilco. Come on, Lefi.”

“Yes, yes, understood. Honestly, you all have too much energy. It remains a mystery to me how you can be so active amidst this vexing sunlight.”

“Uh, that’s actually super normal. The way you’re complaining makes me think *you’re* the vampire here.”

“Whatever do you mean by that?”

Ah, right, vampires in this world only need blood to live. I forgot that they’re not weak to the sun and crosses and stuff. With a self-deprecating smile, I walked next to Lefi, following behind Iluna and Rir.

“Yukiki, Lady Lefifi, look! Look at this big cloud!”

“Oh, you’re right. That thing is huge.”

“Here too! Over here! A biiig tree!”

“Wow! It’s so wide we wouldn’t be able to touch each other’s hands even if all three of us stood around it. I’d say it’s probably a few thousand years old.”

“How can you tell?”

“The wider it is, the more rings it’ll have. And each ring is one year. I bet it’s even older than Lefi.”

“Hmm, quite possible. This area has been in existence since before I was born.”

“Whoooa... Now *that’s* amazing.”

“Oh, c’mere! Come over here too! A huuuge flower!”

“Ha ha, jeez, it looks big enough to swallow us in one bite.”

“Do not get too close to that or else it really will devour you whole.”

“Oh shit, you’re right. Now that I look at it, this is totally a monster, isn’t it?”

I hadn’t caught that because my Scout ability hadn’t reacted at all to it. On closer inspection, it looked like one of those carnivorous plants that preyed on anything that got too close. *Damn, really can’t let my guard down in this forest.*

And so, instead of walking Rir, our stroll became an adventure directed by Iluna’s boundless curiosity. For a while, we wandered here, there, and everywhere she wanted to go while bathing in the warm sunshine.

“Woow!”

“Huh...”

A spring stretched out before our eyes. The water was so clear that we could see the rocks at the bottom, and for whatever reason, the whole spring seemed to be glowing a pale, light blue. There were no fish swimming in it, and there wasn’t a hint of any other life in the vicinity either. With the sunlight flickering through the trees and reflecting off the water’s surface, this place looked like the definition of “sacred.”

“I’ve never seen such a beautiful spring before. You discovered this, Rir?”

Rir nodded in response. He looked proud of himself for being able to show us this place. Lately, I’d been thinking that though he seems composed initially, he actually showed his emotions pretty easily. Or maybe it just felt like that because I could understand him directly since I was the dungeon master.

“It is indeed marvelous. The mana here is quite plentiful as well,” Lefi said with her eyes closed in relaxation, a smile on her face.

“Feels good, huh?”

“Indeed. How can I describe it... Being in a place like this, so rich with mana, it feels as if my body itself is being nourished. What a wonderful sensation.”

Mm, I think I get it. Lefi had told me a while ago that a good deal of her body had adapted to mana, so by coming to a place filled with it, her body might actually be rejuvenating itself. As for me, though I still didn’t fully understand what mana was, I was able to sense magic, so I could tell how comfortable and

soothing this place was. Still holding my hand, even Iluna was enchanted by the spring, her eyes sparkling in wonder.

“All right, since we’re here now, we might as well take a break. Rir, keep watch, would you?”

Nodding his head in agreement, Rir sprawled out on the ground. I sat down next to our beloved pet and let my body relax against his. With a gentle puff, I sank into his beautiful, soft fur.

“Oh, me too!”

Iluna plopped herself down next to me and snuggled into Rir.

“Lefi, get your butt over here.”

“W-Well, if you insist.”

Lefi sank to the ground on Iluna’s other side and leaned against Rir.

“Hmm... This fur is indeed magnificent.”

“Right? This fluffiness is just the best. Guarantee you there’s nothing and no one else out there that’s anywhere near this fluffy.”

“It’s the fluffiness of justice!”

“Damn right it is.”

“I am tempted to pluck it and fashion myself a blanket.”

“Grr?!”

“Can you not? I’d feel so bad for him if you did.”

“I jest, I jest,” Lefi replied, cracking up at Rir’s shocked stare.

Everything quieted down after that. Occasionally, we could hear the wind shaking the trees’ leaves. Birds’ chirps and other animals’ cries reached us from off in the distance as well, adding to the peaceful atmosphere. The three of us spent the time in silence, doing nothing as time passed lazily. It almost felt like we’d become part of the scenery too.

Amazing...

“Heh heh. Your face has softened considerably, Yuki.”

Lefi turned her head my way as she noticed my current condition.

“Well, I was just thinking how nice it is to relax like this.”

“Hm, indeed. I do believe this might be the first instance of me whiling away my time so leisurely.”

“You liar. You’re always lazing around inside the dungeon.”

“A-As if you are not guilty of the same! Besides, what I meant was that spending time like this with others...w-with you both, it is a first for me.”

She looked everywhere but at me, though I could tell just from her voice she was feeling shy.

Yeah, you’d been alone for a long time, huh? Eons, you said. Hearing what she said, though, this might actually have been my first time doing this too. I didn’t have any memories of passing the time so peacefully and comfortably with others like this. I was sure I’d never find this level of peace anywhere but here. I had a hunch about my certainty.

Our bodies are different, our genders are different, and even our races are different, not to mention the worlds we’d originally been born in. But despite all that, I might be more like her than I think.

That popped into my head without warning.

“All right! Let’s play! I actually brought something with me.”

Some time had passed since our siesta at the spring. From my Inventory, I pulled out the “something” I’d mentioned: a frisbee. The minute he saw it, Rir knew I was up to something, and the worried look on his face almost made me feel bad...until I noticed his tail wagging just a little bit.

Mwa ha ha! Gaze upon your kryptonite and suffer! He’d been well and truly ensnared by the frisbee since our first time playing with it. No matter how much his pride tried to get in the way, he could never deny his base instincts.

“Okay, guys, watch how I do this. I’m gonna show you how this works.” I stood up, took off Rir’s leash, then moved away from Lefi and Iluna, frisbee in hand. “Go fetch!”

With a grunt, I flung it as far as I could using all of my demon lord strength. The frisbee soared high into the sky, but Rir skillfully used the nearby trees as stepping stones, jumping higher and higher as he chased his prize. Then he caught it in midair like a champ. Touching down gracefully, he came back to me with the frisbee in his mouth.

“Wowee! Awesome! You’re so cool, Rir!”

“You... When did you perfect such a trick?”

Lefi’s shocked voice was the complete opposite of Iluna’s excited cheers.

“We didn’t practice, if that’s what you mean. Rir’s just that amazing—something like that is a piece of cake for him. Iluna, you wanna try too?”

“Uh-huh! I just have to throw it, right?”

“Yup. Here, hold it like this, then whip it as hard as you can.”

Iluna took the frisbee from Rir and I lightly held her arm, showing her what to do.

“Got it! Okay, Rir, I’m gonna throw it!”

After shouting “Let’s go!” she let the frisbee fly with all her might. It didn’t go very far, but it did hover nicely as it sped away. Rir diligently went after it and caught it in no time. Then, frisbee clamped in his jaws, he trotted back to us.

“Yaaay! Amazing! That was amazing!” The super-happy Iluna jumped on Rir the minute he came back. She squeezed him tightly, looking up at him with sparkling eyes. “Again, Rir! Do it again!”

“Grr.”

He might have seemed resigned on the surface, but his swishing tail told another *tale* entirely. He was really bad at hiding his joy.

Hell yeah, I’m glad you’re having fun. It’s fine to take things seriously, but you need to learn to be a little more honest with yourself, Master Rir. Now, let your instincts run wild and enjoy the life of a pet to your heart’s content!

“Lady Lefifi! Do you wanna try too, Lady Lefifi?”

With a wry smile, Lefi shook her head.

“No, I shall abstain. You three enjoy yourselves.”

“Are you sure? Just tell us if you feel like playing, okay, Lady Lefifi!”

“I will, should it come to pass.”

“Yay! Okay, Rir, one more time!”

While I watched Rir and Iluna playing from the corner of my eye, I moved next to Lefi.

“You can play too, you know? You don’t have to hold back.”

“No, no, it is nothing like that. It merely seems a bit tactless to interrupt them when they are clearly enjoying themselves so much.”

Okay, yeah, I can see that.

“What is that expression, Yuki?”

“Nothing. I’m just surprised that you can actually be considerate over something so small.”

“We really *must* have a discussion regarding your perception of me one of these days, Yuki.”

Lefi aimed a bold smile in my direction, and I responded with a shrug and a laugh.



It was evening now. The setting sun illuminated a girl’s and a young man’s silhouettes. Next to their figures was a third, much larger one. A fourth shape rested on the young man’s back, so small that it blended with that of the young man to create the illusion of a single entity.

“Hey, Lefi?”

“Hm?”

“...Actually, forget it.”

“What is it? Now you must satisfy my curiosity and tell me.”

Her silhouette moved as she looked up at the young man next to her.

“Well, it’s just that I had a lot of fun today. We should do this again soon,

yeah?”

After his earlier moment of hesitation, the young man uttered those words, possibly different from what he’d originally intended to say.

“If the mood strikes me, I will grace you with my presence when that time comes.”

“You can act as high and mighty as you want, but we both know there’s no ‘if’ involved. You’ll end up tagging along just like you always do, right?”

“Hmph, what nonsense.”

The young man’s silhouette shook as he roared with laughter.

“Grr?”

“Ah, no worries. All good here, Rir. Iluna doesn’t weigh much, so I’m fine. Plus, she’s totally knocked out, so I’m afraid she’ll just slide off your back if you carry her.”

“Shall I carry her?”

“I feel like that would hurt my pride as a man, so thanks but no thanks. Oh, and dibs on the bath when we get back. All this sweat is grossing me out.”

“I hunger. I wonder what is on the menu tonight.”

“Agreed. But I’m sure Leila made something good, so...”

Their shadows remained right beside one another. They stayed nestled close, never straying apart. Together.



Afterword

Nice to meet you; this is Ryuyu. I know my name is probably a little weird! I have so much I want to write, but there isn't a lot of space for the afterword, so I'll keep it short. I've already used up three lines with this drivel. First, I'd like to say how moved I am about this, my first published book. I've achieved my dream of becoming an author. I was so excited that I did my own little victory dance. Woo-hoo...

All of this is thanks to Kadokawa for picking up this story and also to Mr. H, the editor who first approached me about my work. I'm also extremely grateful to Daburyu for the wonderful illustrations. The first time I saw them, I snickered in a bit of a creepy way. And of course, I'd like to thank everyone who bought this book, as well as the folks who read the web version!

Because so many of you supported me, my work was finally compiled in book form. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Oh, and many thanks to my friend H, who treated me whenever I was broke and couldn't eat!

I still don't know if I can make it as an author going forward, but I'll make every effort to do so! Bwa ha ha ha, my journey as an author starts now! I hope you'll support me—and Yuki—from here on out!

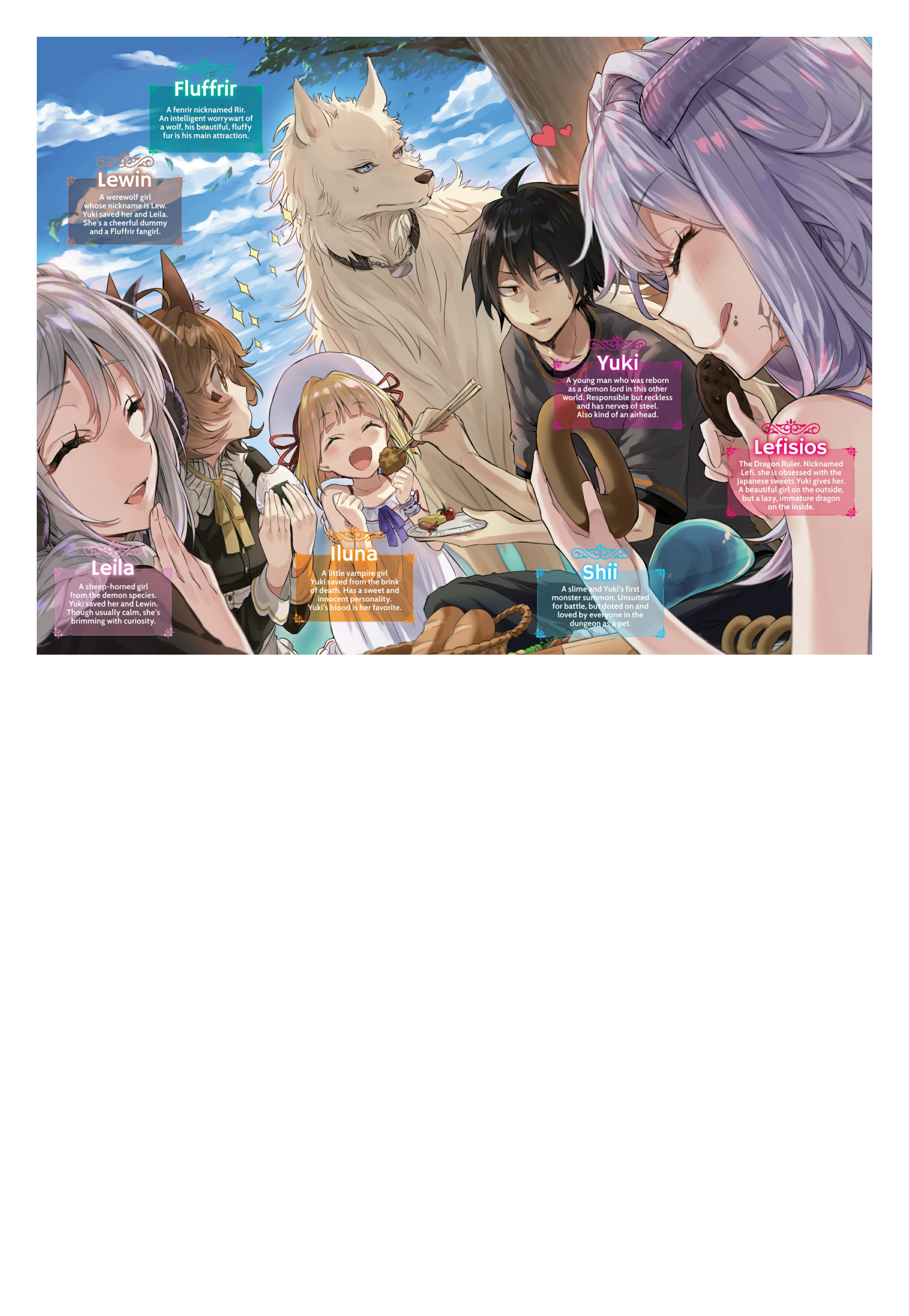
Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**

The dragon became
a silver-haired girl.

"What
the...?"

"Is something
the matter?
That foolish
expression on
your face..."





Fluffrir

A fenrir nicknamed Rir. An intelligent worrywart of a wolf, his beautiful, fluffy fur is his main attraction.

Lewin

A werewolf girl whose nickname is Lew. Yuki saved her and Leila. She's a cheerful dummy and a Fluffrir fangirl.

Leila

A sheep-horned girl from the demon species. Yuki saved her and Lewin. Though usually calm, she's brimming with curiosity.

Iluna

A little vampire girl Yuki saved from the brink of death. Has a sweet and innocent personality. Yuki's blood is her favorite.

Yuki

A young man who was reborn as a demon lord in this other world. Responsible but reckless and has nerves of steel. Also kind of an airhead.

Shii

A slime and Yuki's first monster summon. Unsuitable for battle, but doted on and loved by everyone in the dungeon as a pet.

Lefisios

The Dragon Ruler. Nicknamed Lefi, she is obsessed with the Japanese sweets Yuki gives her. A beautiful girl on the outside, but a lazy, immature dragon on the inside.



I'd spotted
a bruise on
Iluna's cheek.

*Worthless
sacks of shit.*

*This world
would be
better off
if humans
went extinct.*



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Author: Ryuyu

Illustrator: Daburyu

1

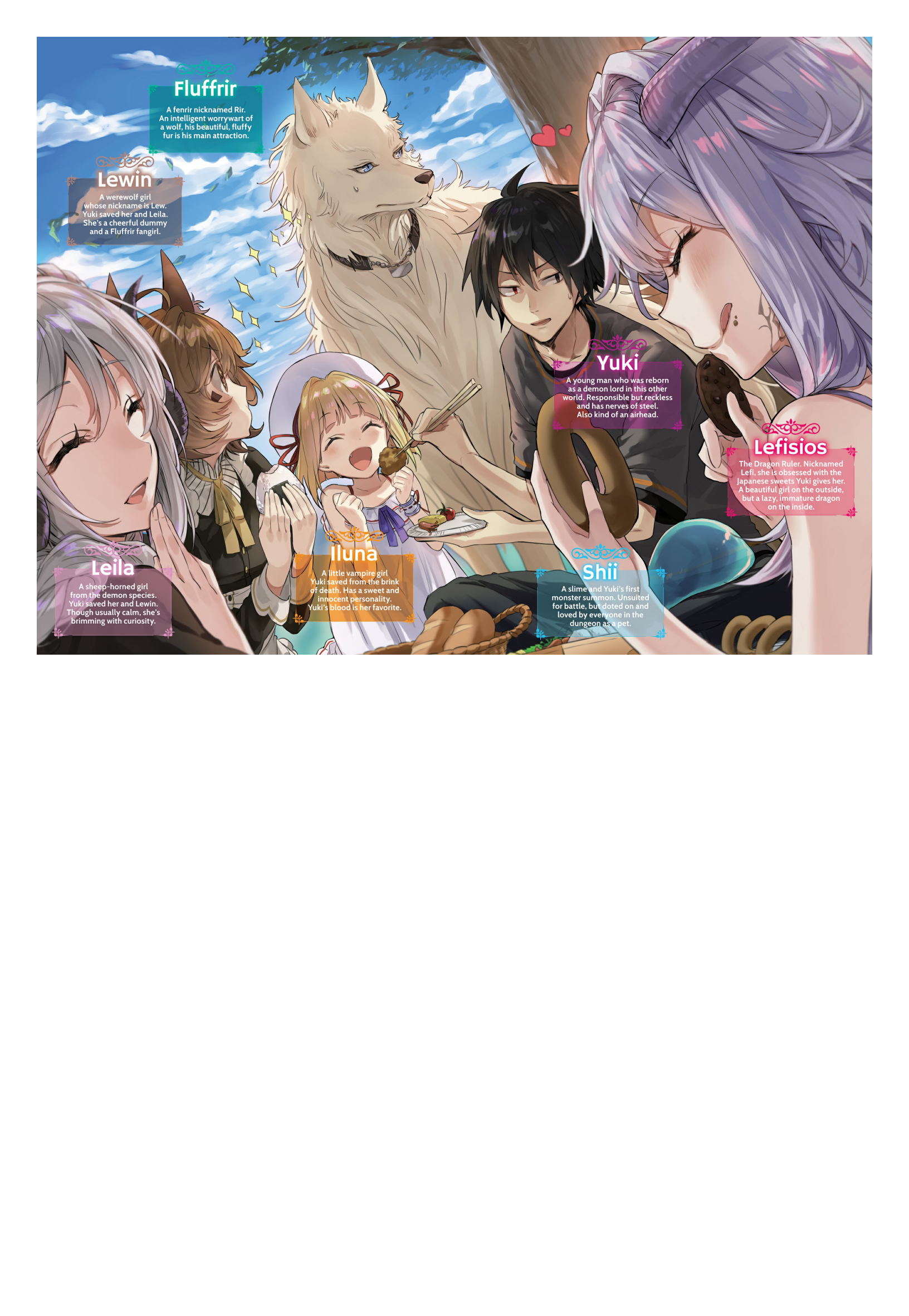
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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Prologue: I Have Wings for Some Reason](#)

[Chapter 1: Encounter](#)

[Chapter 2: Daily Life in a Dungeon](#)

[Side Story 1: A Man Named Yuki](#)

[Chapter 3: Contact](#)

[Chapter 4: Enhancing a Dungeon](#)

[Chapter 5: Defending a Dungeon](#)

[Side Story 2: Gamdia Lawston](#)

[Epilogue: The Start of Each Day](#)

[Special Story: Stroll](#)

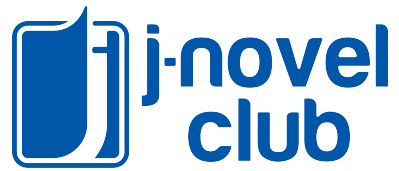
[Afterword](#)

[Color Illustrations](#)

[Bonus High Resolution Illustrations](#)

[About J-Novel Club](#)

[Copyright](#)



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Now I'm a Demon Lord! Happily Ever After with Monster Girls in My Dungeon:
Volume 1

by Ryuyu

Translated by Kashi Kamitoma Edited by Adam Haffen

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MAO NI NATTANODE, DUNGEON TSUKUTTE JINGAI MUSUME TO HONOBONO
SURU Vol. 1

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